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LECTURES ON THE EPISTLES

For Sundays and the Chief Festivals

BY

JOSEPH A. SEISS, D. D., LL.D.,
Author of
"LECTURES ON THE GOSPELS," "ON DANIEL," "ON LEVITICUS," "ON THE APOCALYPSE," "ON THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS," ETC., ETC.

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VOL. II.

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Fourth Sunday after Easter.

JAMES 1 : 16–21 : Do not err, my beloved brethren.

Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.

Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of first-fruits of his creatures.

Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath : for the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God.

Wherefore lay apart all filthiness, and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the ingrafted word, which is able to save your souls.

HRIST'S apostle is anxious that his readers should be true, right-thinking, and upright men, ever working the righteousness of God. This is the Christian calling and the will of God concerning us all.

But even after having been set upon the path of Christian life, we are so weak and so beset with errors and temptations that we are liable to be betrayed, to fall into error, and to make a wreck of our profession. Against these dangers the apostle would particularly guard us, lest our Christianity should be a mere name, and all the grace we have received be made of none effect.

I. He would have us know and remember that God is God, but that He is not therefore the author

of sin or the source of evil. This is a point on which there is often much perplexity and wrong-thinking. If God be God, the questions arise, How came there to be evil in the world, so much disorder in the dominion of a Being of infinite power and justice, such an ever-flowing spring of wrong and misery in the realm of almighty Love? That evil exists no one can doubt; whence, then, has it come? Could not omnipotent Goodness have prevented it? Has He made things so that its presence is inevitable? Why, then, should we be blamed and punished for it? Is not the responsibility for it on Himself? And how, then, can He be that just, good, and holy God which He is claimed to be? These are questions which have perplexed and troubled the human understanding in all ages, and by which every soul is liable to fall into mischievous conclusions, and to be turned away from the right faith, and from salvation itself, if not plunged into downright atheism. Hence the affectionate entreaty of the apostle not to err and deceive ourselves. We are not to excuse sin by loading it on God. People are apt to reason and say to themselves that God made and placed Adam in conditions and surroundings in which He knew he would fall, and could easily have made it otherwise; that He has brought us into the world with these weaknesses and pronenesses to evil, and surrounded us with these tempta tions in which it is next thing to impossible to live as we ought; and that if He is good and just He cannot condemn and punish us for not keeping up to the line of strict holiness. But the conclusion is

all wrong, even if the premises be true. What if God has acted in all the things with a full knowledge of what the result would be, and yet chose to make and arrange things as He has done? What if He did constitute humanity so as to conclude in its very nature and surroundings the absolute certainty of the fall and all its ill consequences? He had a perfect right to do it, and the law of propriety and justice in the case is not our thinking, but His own sovereign will and choice in the matter. The clay has no right to protest against the potter or to find fault with him for making it into a vessel of honor or dishonor. The right and justice of the case lie in His own sovereign will and choice, and not in anything outside of Him. Who art thou, O man, that repliest unto God? Cannot He do what He will with His own, and hold His creatures responsible to whatever His own eternal majesty shall ordain? If He has even caused the incoming of sin, He has also provided a sublimer redemption from it. "Where sin abounded, grace doth much more abound." The vaster gains rendered accessible by grace would still be an ample vindication for the causation of the fall. Failure to profit by the provided remedy cannot be justified by the disease for which it is an ample cure when chance is given for a sublimer destiny than if sin had never been.

But God is not the cause and author of sin. He has constituted moral creatures because moral creatures are the highest of creatures and capable of knowing, doing, and enjoying as no brute nature is capable. But moral creatures must have liberty to

do evil as well as good, and need to prove by the exercise of that freedom whether they be loyal subjects or not. And as Satan and his angels and the original progenitor of our race abused their freedom to disobedience and rebellion, it is the creature-will, and not the appointment and fore-ordination of the Creator, that brought sin into the universe. No man can say when he is tempted that he is tempted of God, "for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth He any man." In the sense of *trying* men, of giving them opportunities of refusing the evil and choosing the good, of showing whether they will keep His commandments or no, God may indeed be said to tempt men, as we read that He *tempted*—that is, *tried*—Abraham. Untried virtue is always uncertain. Moral creatures must needs be tested to prove whether they are true or untrue. In this respect all men are tried, and must be tried, to be the subjects of just promotion and reward. But in the sense of enticing men to sin, or of forcing conditions upon them in which they can do no otherwise than sin, God tempteth no man. "Every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then, when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin; and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death;" but the guilt and blame of it rest on the creature, not on the all-holy Creator. God is God, but not the author of sin; and therefore we cannot hope that He will excuse it.

II. The apostle would have us know and remember that God is the Fountain of all good, and so deserves our devoutest gratitude and obedience.

Though there is much evil in the world, there is much good also. Nature is framed and ordered in every part with admirable wisdom and beneficence. Contrivance and forethought are everywhere manifest in the constitution of things and in the adaptations of one part to another; and that contrivance is uniformly benevolent, merciful, and gracious. Even where the disorder is greatest the traces of heavenly goodness are still discernible. With all its drawbacks, this is still a beautiful world, rich in blessings, pervaded with attractiveness, glad with enjoyments, and overstrewn with innumerable mercies. Though all its people are sinners, there are not many who would not be willing to stay in it for ever. The poorest and the sickliest, and those who enjoy it the least, need no persuading to reconcile them to abide here much longer than they can. It is a happiness to live even this poor life. It is a pleasant thing for the eyes to behold the sun. In spite of the wickednesses that despoil human society, and the presence of pains and diseases, and the inevitable closing of our career in death and the grave, there is sufficient charm in this world to make people like it, however much they complain and speak against it. Whence, then, has all this come? Man has not made it. No science, choice, or wisdom of ours hath brought it about. As sin is from the creature, so are earth's ills and griefs; but it is not so with earth's good. That could come only from the great Maker and Upholder of all things. It is not from sun, moon, and stars, and can only be, as the apostle declares, "from the Father of lights"—He who lives and

reigns in His own sovereign dominion over all things and by whom all things consist. The dry land, with its hills, mountains, valleys, rivers, fountains, herbage, cattle, singing birds, murmuring brooks, blooming flowers, and exhaustless treasures, overarched with the starry sky and girded around by the beautiful sea; the changing seasons, the alternating nights and days, the succession of seedtime and harvest, the steadily rolling years, the cheering variety of climates, the innumerable fruits which spring out of the ground, and the never-ending certainty and order of all Nature's laws,—whence have they all come? The wonderful framework of our bodies, the perfection with which we are adapted to the world around us, the subordination of the whole earthly creation to our use and service, the joyous affections of society, friendship, and home, the boundless capacities for knowledge and the vastness of the theatres for its attainment, the glories of speech, free thought, and grand accomplishment, and the unnumbered blessings which every day renews both to the just and the unjust,—whence are all these? How came they to be but from the creative will and sovereign gift of that almighty God who never wearies in the work of upholding, directing, and dispensing from His own exhaustless majesty for the comfort and happiness of what He has made?

These are the "good gifts" which come down from the Father of lights; and to them is added the vast sum of gifts more exalted and more perfecting—even His more special arrangements and doings to subdue and overcome the evil in man, de-

liver from its penalty and power, and transform into the likeness of His own glorious Self. Before man was excluded from Eden for his sin there was a Saviour promised and an economy of grace ordained, by which beclouded nature could be recovered to its primeval brightness, sin dethroned, and a destiny of far higher dignity and glory secured. As the ages rolled, these promises fulfilled, the promised Saviour came, the condemnation of the law was met, the Spirit of power and renewal was poured out from on high, the tidings of free salvation were published throughout the world, and all the fallen sons and daughters of men invited to the blessedness of eternal redemption, so that whosoever will avail himself of the precious boon which cost the blood and mediation of Jesus Christ can obtain the heavenly anointing to eternal life, glory, and dominion.

What a crime to think the author of all this good at the same time the creator of sin with its damning ills and miseries! What an unrighteousness not to honor, love, and obey such a good Father as the object of our supremest reverence! And what punishable ingrates do we make ourselves to consume His free, multitudinous, and glorious benefactions without lifting our souls in holy worship of His blessed Name!

III. The apostle would have us know and remember that God is immutable, and that so should our piety and devotion be. The brightest orbs of light have their constant variations. They are not always the same, and are never the second time in the same place. The moon is now here, now there, now

bright, now dark. The sun comes up and goes down. At one season it is at one place, and then at another. Its shadows are continually lengthening and shortening. One orb and another casts its shadow now at one place, then elsewhere. And there is an everlasting turning about and shifting of position, so that what was the while bright becomes dark, and the dark bright, with nothing steady, permanent, and unvarying. But it is not so with the great Father of lights. He is a sun that never rises or sets, but ever shines in one fixed and unchanging splendor. His standing-place is ever the same. With Him there is no dark side, no casting of varying shadow, no recurrence of seasons, no alternations, no eclipse, no evidence of turning or change. He is immutable in His nature, and immutable in His position, always the same and always on the meridian—the original and ever-abiding Father of lights. His gifts are without repentance. He loves with no variable love, and commands with no changes in His laws and requirements. To honor Him at all according to His nature and His claims is to honor Him with a steady, firm, and unchanging obedience, love, and trust. Alas for human fickleness in comparison with Jehovah's immutability! What are the turnings and changes and eclipses and shadows that appear in our services, hearts, lives, and tempers! From the light of devotion to the shadow of sin how frequent and ready is the transition! God is an unvarying light; man is a series of endless contradictions—one thing to-day and another thing to-morrow, dividing the empire of his mind

between wisdom and folly, truth and falsehood, duty and disobedience—without stability of purpose, devotion, or character. So it should not be with the worshippers and servants of an immutable God; and the apostle emphasizes the great Father's unchangeableness that those who would be His true children may imitate the same, and never count on His being anything else than He is in His nature, His demands, His promises, or His purposes. Of old His declaration was, "*I am the Lord; I change not;*" and therefore are we the more to adore Him in humility and gratitude, the more to trust in Him and His word, and to serve Him with a devotion of all the more unvarying tenor.

IV. The apostle would have us know and remember that, as Christians, God hath begotten us as His children, and therefore we should render Him the reverent obedience due from children. "Of His own will begat He us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of first-fruits of His creatures." Genuine Christianity is not a mere change of dress or associations or opinions or profession, but it involves a change of *the man*, a refashioning of our nature, the touching of us with the power of a new creation, a veritable regeneration. Every true Christian is begotten over again to a new principle of life. There is an impartation of the life of God which makes of us "new creatures," and in some sense partakers of the divine nature; so that it is no longer so much we that live as God living in us. It is not a thing of our own doing, any more than our original generation. It is a thing effected by the will and

power of God on the basis of the redeeming work of Christ, through the Spirit, by means of the Word of truth. There is in the Gospel this grace and energy that, into whatsoever heart it comes, and there is entertained, it begets or superinduces a new spiritual being, the Father of which is God and the fruit of which is the making of us the children of God in a sense which by nature we cannot be. Hence the apostle John could say, "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be."

And if thus really begotten unto God, it pertains to us to be to Him reverent and obedient children, especially in certain stated points. Be we God's children indeed? Then it pertains to us to be *swift to hear* the Father's voice, teachings, admonitions, and commands; *slow to speak* in that Father's presence or in that Father's name, or as if we were possessed of that Father's prerogatives and judgments; *slow to wrath*, avoiding petulance and angry passion, and laying aside all irreverent indecencies, uncleannesses, and overflowings of ugly, wicked, and malicious behavior. Though begotten of God, it yet remains for that new life to be wrought into all the departments of our natural being, to interpenetrate and purify the entire man, and to conform us in inward temper and in all outward conduct to the position and character of genuine children of God. Ignorant, we need to know, and to be eager to learn from the Father of all illumination. Erring and prone to mistake, we need to be slow in pronouncing judgment. And with a very unruly and treacher-

ous heart to deal with, we need to be careful how we give loose rein to our passions or allow free play and expression to our own likes and feelings.

The oldest children are specially called to be a sort of second parents to the rest of the family. They are to be an example to the younger ones. In the old laws they had superior rights and honors, and to them it pertains to lead off in the proprieties and dignity of right sonship as the special representatives of the family name and honor next to the father. And so Christians are "a kind of first-fruits." The present Church is the congregation or assembly of the first-born. The superior rights of inheritance and rulership pertain to those who are begotten to God in this dispensation. When the Chief Shepherd shall appear they are to possess the crown of glory which fadeth not away, and to have everlasting pre-eminence in the kingdom to come. And because we have so high a calling and such exalted precedence it pertains to us to be all the more devout, earnest, and faithful in all that relates to us as God's children. We are the elder born, and so much depends on us and our dutifulness that all the divine inculcations and requirements have double force and urgency in our case. As we fail and languish in our fidelity, the whole cause must suffer and the house will not be built up as God intends. Many will fail to be brought in, and come short by reason of our shortcomings. Therefore we are to be all the more particular and zealous in the work of righteousness, being swift to hear, slow to speak, and slow to wrath, laying apart all filthiness and un-

fittingness of speech and conduct as the first-born children of God.

V. The apostle would have us know and remember that God is anxious to bring us to full salvation, and hence that we should receive with meekness the ingrafted Word, which is able to save our souls. The grafting process is necessarily one of hurt to the natural scion. There must be a cutting and wounding of that into which the grafting is to be done. Nor can we receive the graft of the saving Word without sharp incisions into the old carnal nature, the humiliation of our natural pride, and the cutting away of much in which the natural man luxuriates. But it is for our profit and salvation, and hence is to be patiently endured. We must be willing to surrender self and all our carnal likes and preferences, that the truth may be inserted and the conditions secured for the germs of a better life and a happy fruitfulness unto good and heaven.

But the cutting away is not all. There must be also a ready and willing adjustment of the life of the old stock to the needs and requirements of the new germ. The sap and juices must turn to it, to nourish it, to knit on to it, and to make it part of the being and life of the tree. The graft needs more than external insertion: it requires inward reception and the vital conditioning of things to keep it alive and to make it grow and bear fruit. The mere sticking of a graft on a bleeding tree amounts to nothing unless there is a living union formed and the life of the tree joins itself to the new insertion. Spring may come and open the buds; summer may

come and fill the orchard with foliage; and autumn may come for the gathering of the ripened fruits; but no leaf, no flower, no fruit appears upon that unhappy graft. Held on by nothing but dead clay and rotting cords, it sticks to the living tree only as a withered and unsightly thing. The original growth has refused to receive and adopt it, and has withheld the accommodation of itself to it, and has not suffered its life to be conditioned and used by it; and hence the whole operation and intent is a failure. And so it must be with the Gospel where it is not meekly taken up by the soul. The trimming and lopping off of old limbs and habits by way of reform are not enough. The actual bringing of the new life-branch to its place, and its adjustment there with every nicety, is not enough. There must be a life-union between the two. The old must consent to live for the new and in the new, and send forth its energies according to the wants and demands of the new, or the whole process comes to naught. We must receive with meekness the ingrafted Word, make it part of our life and soul, conform all the activities and energies of our being to it, and look and aim at growth and fruitfulness in it and according to its better nature and laws of development, or the grafting will be of no saving effect. Better repudiate and reject the Gospel altogether, and face the momentous peradventures of eternity as best we can, than make a mere sham of religion, a penance, a miserable hypocrisy and abortion. Better never know the way of righteousness than thus to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto us. It

is a betrayal with a kiss of the very Saviour whom we profess to revere and follow. No, no; if we would be the true children of God, and live up to our high calling of God in Christ Jesus, and "be found of Him in peace, without spot, and blameless," we must consent to live the Word that is put into our souls, with meekness receive and entertain it as our proper life, and seek to bring forth fruit according to it.

Thus, then, would the holy apostle stir us up to the working of the righteousness of God. God is God, but He has not made our sins a matter of necessity which He cannot blame and punish, or our failures unavoidable and excusable. He is the source of multitudinous good and perfect gifts, for which He deserves our devoutest gratitude and obedience. He is immutable and unfailing in His graciousness and promises, and so should be our piety and devotion. He has begotten us by the Word of His truth as His own children, and we should honor and serve Him even as His favored first-born. He means that we should be saved, and therefore we should meekly receive and energetically conform to His saving Word.

Dear friends, ye know these things; how far are you concerning yourselves to do them? There is no truer wisdom, no safer philosophy, no better way to order and spend these lives of ours, than is thus indicated by the holy apostle. Let us see to it, then, that we do not receive all this knowledge and precious grace in vain.

Fifth Sunday after Easter.

JAMES 1 : 22–27: But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.

For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: for he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was.

But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed.

If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain.

Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.

THE most momentous subject that can engage the attention of man in this world is the subject of religion. Our happiness for time and eternity depends upon it. No man can ever be right till he is right toward God. And yet it is the subject above all in which the greatest follies and absurdities are enacted. The pagan sacrificed his white heifer, cast incense on the flame, and went away supposing himself justified before high Heaven. The Mohammedan bathes and turns nine times toward Mecca, and deems himself cleansed from all iniquities. The Hindoo keeps to his caste, abstains from eating what has life, blesses

his sacred river, and accounts these things to himself for righteousness. The Jew reads a few Hebrew verses on Saturday, circumcises his children, observes the Passover and New Year, and considers himself sanctified. And since the revelation of Christ professed Christians have betimes been as irrational, worshipped with as little heart, stained their career with like superstitions, and variously served the devil and their own wild fancies under guise of honoring Jehovah. Even to this day, and where we would look for better things, the instances are plentiful in which professed believers deceive themselves into all sorts of ruinous imaginings.

Accordingly, the very practical apostle James has much to say against religious fallacies and deceptions. His words, as presented in our Epistle Lesson, bring before us,

I. The Two Sides of True Religion;
II. The Evil of Divorcing them.

And may the good Lord aid us in the understanding of the truth and help us against spiritual delusions!

I. The Two Sides of True Religion.

1. It is quite evident that religion must have some sort of doctrine or theology on which it rests. True religion, above all, must have the truth for its foundation. The worship and service of the true God cannot exist without a knowledge of God and a true doctrine, teaching, and belief concerning Him. So

also with regard to what is pleasing and acceptable to Him, and how we are to think and order ourselves toward Him, especially in our approaches to Him in holy services. Christianity presents itself as a teaching, a creed, a system of sacred truth derived from God, recorded in the Word of God, and by His prophets and apostles given for doctrine, reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness. The ministers of Christ are sent to make disciples of all nations, principally by "*teaching them.*" There must be information imparted and received respecting God and His law and will, respecting the condition, relations, and obligations of man, the need for a Saviour, who and what that Saviour is, what His work, administrations, and appointments are, on what terms we become partakers of His salvation, and what we are to count on in rendering the devotions and services which He has ordained. And all this is laid down as the primary and most vital thing in the only true and saving religion. Faith in God, faith in Christ, faith in the revelations and promises of the divine Word, are everywhere set forth as absolutely essential to a right Christian and to salvation; but the first element of faith is knowledge. Hence the whole system of the Christian religion is called doctrine, a teaching, a form of instruction and belief, touching the things of God and our eternal life.

But this is only one side of the matter. True religion is not mere doctrine. It is also practice. It is not only a thing for the head to know, but something for the active powers to embody in living form. An orthodox creed remains to be complemented by

an orthodox life. The sacred doctrine lying powerless in the intellect is not religion. However true and perfect the mental apprehension, it fails if nothing further comes of it. Without it there can be no true religion, as there can be no harvest without a seeding; but if the seed remains in the ground and never germinates, there is no more harvest than if no sowing had taken place. There must be right life as well as doctrine. These are the two sides of the thing which belong together, and both are equally essential.

2. It is further evident that, as true religion is a teaching and has its seed and centre in doctrine, it necessarily belongs to it carefully to hear and learn that teaching. "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God." There can be no effectual seeding or harvesting without ground on which to sow the seed, and that ground softened and mellowed to receive and entertain the seed. There must be good soil, and that soil in right condition. A beaten footpath will not answer, for there the seed cannot find entrance or covering. A thin soil, where the rocks are near the surface, will not answer, for there the moisture soon fails and the growth withers away. Soil that is full of thorns and briers will not answer, for these hardier growths will spring up and choke the good seed and render it unfruitful. What is needed is good, mellow, clean, and nutritive ground to receive, entertain, and foster the seed that is sown upon it. This is the Saviour's own picture of what is necessary to fruitfulness in His religion. There must be hearing of the Word, an attentive reception

of it into good and honest hearts, or it cannot come to its proper intent. Nor is there a deeper practical necessity in true religion than for us to take heed how we hear.

But this hearing of the Word is again only one side of the matter. The *doing* of what is heard is just as essential as the hearing. There be many who are ready enough in the hearing, but very derelict and defective in the doing. In Ezekiel's time God complainingly spoke to the prophet concerning people who were anxious to hear the Word, and came to him as the people came, and sat before him as the Lord's people, and heard his words, but they would not do them. They admired the prophet's eloquence. He was to them as a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice and can play well on an instrument. They heard his words, but *they did them not* (Ezek. 33 : 30–32). But what is the hearing without the doing? It is only a one-sided thing—a commencement without continuity, a foundation without a superstructure, a porch without a house. Hence the very earnest admonition of the apostle: "Be ye *doers* of the Word, and not hearers only."

3. It is very clear also that true religion must ever embrace in it the fulfilment of God's law. No system of worship and devotion can ever suspend or put aside what Jehovah engraved upon the two tables of stone as the ever-abiding transcript of His own perfections touching what He requires of His moral creatures. The essence of that law is that we love the Lord our God with all the heart, mind, soul,

and strength, and our neighbor as ourselves. This is God's law for all time and all space, founded on His immutable nature and Godhead, and so must ever hold with all beings, in all things, for all dispensations, and in all states and conditions. It can no more go out of binding force than God can cease to be or fail in His eternal Godhead. Christ, at the very beginning of His ministry and in all His subsequent teachings, was particular to say, "Think not that I am come to destroy the law or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil" (Matt. 5 : 17). Even faith does not make void the law, but establishes it (Rom. 3 : 31). Yea, verily, till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law till all be fulfilled (Matt. 5 : 18).

True religion, therefore, necessarily carries with it the law and the everlasting obligation of the law. Nay, it is the very perfecting and the highest fulfilment and honor of the law that Christianity is meant to realize. The law holds now, and holds upon every Christian, as truly and irreversibly as ever it held upon anybody or any creature of God.

But this, again, is only one side of the matter. Though the law holds with regard to true believers, it does not hold by way of condemnation, since Christ as their Redeemer has fully satisfied all its claims for them. There is verily no sin, guilt, defect, or unrighteousness in humanity for which Jesus has not made ample payment and satisfaction, exhausting the entire penalty of the law, once and for ever, by His obedience, sufferings, and death, on account of which God now completely absolves and jus-

tifies every one who believes on the Lord Jesus Christ and rests upon Him as his righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. The law holds and remains as ever it did, and as much condemns sin as ever it did; but wherein sinners have violated it, or wherein believers come short in the keeping of it, which is every day and all the time of this present life, Christ has answered to it for us, and continually answers, so that those who take refuge in Christ are quite exempted from the impossible task of working out their own justification. The law in their case is not rescinded, but perfected, honored, fulfilled to the last jot by the merit and righteousness of Christ, so that we are by faith in Him released from its power to hold us under its penalties, though we have richly deserved them. In other words, we are now free in Christ, exonerated and exempted from what of ourselves we could never have paid. The law holds, but through Christ it has become an already fulfilled and perfected law, and hence a law of liberty and justification, and no longer a law of bondage to condemnation. What the law prescribes is still the will and mind of God, and its requirements we are still to aim at fulfilling with all diligence and carefulness; but what we do now in conformity to the law is from the spirit of childship in Christ, and not from penal obligation as slaves to an inexorable bondage. The more perfectly we can keep it, the more do we honor and please God and show that we are His true and loving children; but the attempt to work our own justification by keeping it is a legalism as impossible for us to succeed in as it is destructive of the true

Gospel system. It is but a one-sided view of the case which fails to reach the true heart and marrow of the sublime scheme on which all our hopes as sinners rest. Our very redemption by Christ from the bondage of the law is that by a free and filial service we may fulfil the law, and so strengthen and grow through His redeeming and helping grace as to become holy, even as He our Lord is holy. It is not our sanctification that is our justification, but our justification is the beginning, motive, and help to a free-will consecration and sanctification, transmuting the law of bondage into a perfected law of liberty. A child does its father's will because it is a true child; the slave does that same will because *he must*. The will in both cases holds, but to the one it is a bondage, and to the other it is a happy and joyous liberty. And whilst true Gospel religion retains and fulfils the law, it is the law spontaneously obeyed in the spirit of the child, and not the law laid upon us as a burden which we must bear or perish. On the one side the law must stand, but on the other side it is now a perfected law of liberty; and the one without the other is not the true religion.

4. It is also clear and evident that true religion involves and requires a profession and a full and open devotion of one's self to God in all those rites and services which His religion prescribes. Christianity contemplates a society of believing worshippers, distinctly marked by its gathering around the Word, its confession of its faith and hope, its witnessing for the God and Saviour whom it adores, and its segregation from the common world as a

body to itself made up of the consecrated people of God. True religion must needs evidence itself in a Church, union in worship and confession, open consociation in the hearing of the Word and the observance of the sacraments. As the soul puts itself forth in the body, so religion incorporates itself in outward form which can be seen and known, and which has its own separate history in the world. It is simply impossible to understand how people can be Christians, and yet refuse to let themselves be known as Christians, and will not profess and call themselves Christians.

But people may be externally conjoined with everything that marks and characterizes the Christian body or Church, and be very loud and proud in their Christian profession and services, and yet be quite deficient in true religion. The outward form and profession is only one side of the matter. It is necessary, but it is worthless by itself. There is another side which needs to go with it to make it complete. A man may be confident and orthodox in his profession, and rejoice himself in it as his most valued treasure on earth; but it cannot help him if unaccompanied with a corresponding spirit. He must be able to bridle his tongue, to govern his temper, to restrain his passions, or his external show of religion and all his outward conformities, observances, and zeal for God are vain. He must have in him the spirit of love and charity; he must have a care for the needy and distressed, the orphans and the widows; he must have a heart that can sympathize with the afflicted, and a hand to show tender-

ness and mercy to the defenceless and the sorrowing,—or his religiousness is lacking in one of the essential elements of pureness before God. And as he professes to have renounced the vanities of the world and all its ill ways and spirit, he must keep himself unspotted from it by a pure and unstained life, or he will claim in vain that his religion is unprofaned before the God and Father whom he thinks to honor and glorify. The *form*alities of the thing are one side, the inward *re*alities are another.

In these several respects, then, does the apostle bring to our view the two sides of true religion.

Note, now,

II. The Evil of Divorcing them.

1. If in either case the one side be separated from the other, the whole thing becomes nugatory and vain. Divorcing doctrine and practice spoils both, for the one remains inert, and the other becomes an impossibility. Divorcing hearing and doing, the same result must follow, and the hearing results in no good. It is like a man beholding himself in a mirror and straightway forgetting what manner of man he was. Divorcing the law from evangelic freedom, the one becomes an inexorable taskmaster from whose oppressive condemnation there is no possible deliverance, and the other becomes a free permit to all licentiousness, defeats the fitting of the soul for a holy heaven, and never reaches the end for which it is intended. Divorcing religious forms, observances, and profession from the realities of an inward self-rule, charity, and thorough severance from

the falsities and defilements of the world; the profession is a mere emptiness, and the rest evaporates into nothingness. So, in either instance, the man who would be religious in one without the other renders all his religion vain.

2. But the attempt or allowance of such divorce is worse than vain. It brings with it a deep and lasting injury and disability to the soul. To know the truth and not to put it to practice, to hear without endeavor to do, to feel the bondage and condemnation of God's holy law and not to embrace the only deliverance from it that can ever come, and to make an outward profession and boast of our religion without cherishing and exemplifying its living spirit, involves the stifling of all the right sensibilities and workings of the mind, which blunts it, hardens it, and tends to disable all right appreciation, judgment, and what should move and control it. If made habitual, it becomes a sort of second nature which is hard to be got rid of. It thus not only unmakes the good effect of what we have, but tends to destroy the power by which a better state of things is to be attained. It is a dangerous thing to trifle with conscience and the demands of known truth and duty. Apart from the sin of it is the deadening effect it has upon the behests of conscience and the soul's regard for its own consistency and honor. And in proportion as it is indulged and continued, the feebler is the chance of ever getting right.

3. The apostle also speaks of an alarming self-deception and imposture going along with such divorce of the two sides of religion. He who knows with-

out practising, or hears without doing, deceives and ensnares his own self. He cheats himself with fallacies. He is made to think of himself, and calculate beyond what he is in truth entitled to think. Because people are informed with regard to the orthodox faith, and habitually and approvingly listen to it, they are predisposed to credit themselves with a standing and merit in religion the same as if they were actually the practisers and doers of what they acknowledge and rejoice in. Their very knowledge and orthodoxy become a snare to them, and because they are the habitual and delighted *hearers* of the Gospel they are led to view and rate themselves as if they were the *doers* of it. It is a wretched self-deception, for not every one that saith Lord! Lord! shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of the Father which is in heaven. People live what the world calls moral lives; they have connection with an orthodox Church; they attend on the public worship; they hold to the accepted creed; they are zealous helpers and defenders of the evangelic cause against errorists and dissenters,—and so they conclude that their chances are all right and their religion pure and unprofaned before God; and yet, like the Pharisees of old, they may be mere whited sepulchres, beautiful to the outward beholder, but inwardly full of rottenness. And this fatal self-delusion is almost sure to come to people who are not strict to practise what they know, to do the Word they are so pleased to hear, and to show in life and spirit what they profess. The truth is, that we are all strongly predisposed to think our

selves better than we are—to overrate what looks to the side of good, and to wink at what looks to the side of deficiency—to recur to our better knowledge as an offset to our worse practice. It is a pleasant flattery and an agreeable deception. It winds itself through our minds and soothes us when we would otherwise be ill at ease. We like it, and therefore we are loth to disturb it. And so we settle ourselves down to comfort and hope through a half-religion which, if it amounts to nothing more, can never avail for our salvation.

4. And any form of such half-piety must all the more enhance our condemnation if it does not come to something better. Sacred knowledge is a great and awful gift. To know the way of righteousness, and to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto us, is far worse than never to have heard of it. To know our duty and not to do it must needs augment the severities of final judgment. The servant who knew his Lord's will and did it not shall be beaten with many stripes. Nor can it fail to be an extra thorn in the ultimate lot of those who have come so near to the kingdom and salvation of God, and yet fail for lack of full consistency. Ah, that Creed, so oft recited, so fondly cherished, so clearly apprehended, how will it disturb and harass the thinking of the lost, whose only fault was that they did not join to it the life to which it obligates! Those Gospel sermons, so willingly heard and so heartily commended, how will they ring in the tortured memories of the unsaved, whose sole defect was that they were only hearers of the Word and

not doers of it! That courageous profession, on which so much was built, for which such glowing zeal was felt, and of which no martyr death could have induced a surrender, how will it sharpen the fires of perdition for those whose only lack was that they had not charity!

Dear friends, these things are no trifles. They are the most momentous and solemn that can engage the attention of the human soul. They concern us all alike, for this world and for all eternity. And they are the most intensely practical of all things. What effect, then, do we propose that they shall have upon us? To have the truth is a transcendent good, but not to be conformed to it in life and practice makes it all of none effect. To be privileged to sit and hear, Sunday by Sunday, from year to year, the clear and blessed Word of grace and salvation is a favor worth more than all the world besides; but not to be doers of the Word must fasten upon us a destiny to be exempt from which we would willingly give a thousand worlds when it is too late for remedy. Precious are our present opportunities. The truths of the Gospel have come to us. The Word of salvation is abundantly sounding. Privilege is ample and duty is plain. The day of grace is here, and we have every chance to profit by it. We have the orthodoxy; let us be sure to add the corresponding practice and life. We have the Word sounding in our ears; let us not fail to be *doers* of it. The curse of the law is taken away if now we will but seek freely and lovingly to do God's will as His own dear children. We profess the good profession;

let us, then, exemplify its spirit by a right self-government and a living charity. So, then, shall the blessedness of them that do the Father's will be ours, both in this world and in that which is to come. Otherwise we may rest assured that our religion is without saving power.

Not words alone it cost the Lord
To purchase pardon for His own;
Nor will a soul by grace restored
Return the Saviour's words alone.

Easy, indeed, it were to reach
A mansion in the courts above
If swelling words and fluent speech
Might serve in place of faith and love.

But none shall gain the blissful place,
Or God's unclouded glory see,
Who talks of free and sovereign grace,
Unless that grace has made him free.

Ascension Day.

ACTS 1 : 1–11 : The former treatise have I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach, until the day in which he was taken up, after that he through the Holy Ghost had given commandments unto the apostles whom he had chosen : to whom also he showed himself alive after his passion, by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God : and being assembled together with them, commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith he, ye have heard of me.

For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence.

When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel? And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons which the Father hath put in his own power.

But ye shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you : and ye shall be witnesses unto me, both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.

And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight.

And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel; which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.

WE confess in the Creed that Christ, having been dead and buried, rose again from the dead and ascended into heaven, and sitteth at the right hand of God the Father almighty. By this we mean that, after having risen

from the dead, He did, according to His human nature, by a true and local motion, according to His own voluntary purpose, and in a *visible* manner, ascend up into the clouds, and thence, in an *invisible* manner, into the heaven of blessedness and to the very throne of God; so that, having triumphed over His enemies, He might occupy the kingdom of God, reopen the closed doors of Paradise, and prepare a permanent inheritance and dominion for all His true people. It was not a mere disappearance or vanishing from the sight—not a mere going into invisibility, as on some previous occasions—but a real taking of Himself up, a local transfer, a visible and true ascension.

The fact that Christ did thus ascend into heaven is one of the great foundation-truths of our Christian faith, and hence forms a part of the fundamental Creed. It rests on the same testimony with all the other great facts concerning our Saviour. The ancient prophets spoke of it (Ps. 24:7–10; 68:18; 110:1; Isa. 52:13). Christ Himself foretold it (Luke 22:69; John 6:62; 7:33; 8:21; 14:28; 16:5; 20:17). The apostles and evangelists all testify to it, most of whom, if not all, were the eye-witnesses of it (Mark 16:19; Luke 24:50–53; 1 Pet. 1:16). And the visions of Stephen and Paul, as well as the descent of the Holy Ghost as He promised, also attest it.

The object of Christ's ascension was to receive supreme power as the Head and Lord of the Church; to appear in heaven as our High Priest, Intercessor, and Advocate; to procure and send the gift of the

Holy Ghost; to act as the Forerunner of His people in preparing an inheritance and home for them, and to mature His arrangements for the bringing of them, at His second coming, to His own heavenly glory.

And this sublime lifting up and coronation of our Saviour in heaven has been the subject of a special service and commemoration in the Christian Church from its earliest ages. Many make but little of it, particularly in these days of aberration from the great evangelic verities; but it is worthy of the devoutest celebration of all who do really believe the Gospel, and the festival itself is one of precious consolation to those who enter into it with spirit and understanding.

The Epistle for the day naturally resolves itself into several important particulars with regard to the Saviour's ascension:

I. The Need of the Church in View of it;
II. The Duty of the Church Because of it;
III. The Comfort of the Church in it.

I can notice these points only briefly; but may our gracious Lord and Redeemer help us from His holy heaven to grasp them aright!

I.

The evangelist tells us that it was forty days after Christ's resurrection before He ascended into heaven. And it appears from what he says that there were two important things for the Church to which He

devoted this delay. The one was to give full and invincible proofs of the reality of His resurrection, and the other to give full instructions concerning His Church and kingdom for the guidance of His followers after His departure.

The Resurrection of Christ from the dead is indeed the great corner-stone upon which the whole Christian faith reposes. Christ Himself staked the final demonstration of His Messiahship upon it. The apostles make it the root and spring of all our Christian hopes, telling us that "if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain" (1 Cor. 15 : 14). It was most needful, then, in view of His going away, that He should give and leave indubitable evidences of the reality and certainty of the fact that, being put to death, He rose again according to the Scriptures, and is alive for evermore. And to work this certainty into the immutable belief and convictions of His people He continued in the world after His resurrection, and "showed Himself alive after His Passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days," manifesting Himself in all sorts of ways and places to one and another, to the apostles as a body, and to as many as five hundred at once. Nor is the Church truly itself, or in condition to stand as His Church, or to hope for salvation through Him, except as it believes, holds, confesses, and preaches that Christ, being crucified, dead, and buried, verily rose again from the dead, and is for ever alive, clothed with the powers of an immortal mastery over death and all ills as the Redeemer of His people. Those who

talk of a resurrection of Christ, but deny that it was a literal and corporeal resurrection, or speak of His ascent into heaven, but deny that it was a local and visible ascension, belie a fundamental fact in our redemption, and brand all the witnesses of it as deceivers and falsifiers. The Church must ever rest upon the immutable certainty of the true and literal resurrection of Christ from among the dead, and build upon that, or it denies and unmakes itself and all its hopes.

But, building on this foundation, it still remains equally necessary for the Church to have right ideas concerning the nature of Christ's kingdom and what place it occupies in the Saviour's absence. The first disciples, notwithstanding the positive teachings of the Saviour while He was with them, were very faulty on this subject. They could not rid themselves of the idea that He was to be a sort of earthly Cæsar come to set up a dominion of earthly rulership, to free Israel of every yoke, and to reign as a temporal prince and conqueror. Something of such a kingdom was indeed included in the promises, and is in due time to be realized, after its own heavenly sort, in the ultimate consummation of all things, but only as the outcome of a spiritual administration and reign in the hearts of believers by means of His Word and Spirit, and the incorporation of the Holy Ghost in a Church still in contact with error and sin and lying under the cross. This needed particularly to be made clear to them in view of the fact that He in whom they trusted to redeem Israel was now to be corporeally removed, and to remain

absent for two thousand years or more. Hence the Saviour utilized these forty days and His post-resurrection converse with His disciples to instruct them in "the things pertaining to the kingdom of God."

What He taught them we learn from the writings which they have left us for our enlightenment and guidance. By studying the Scriptures we shall know, and from them we learn that in the King's personal absence and heavenly administrations His kingdom is only a spiritual rule in men's hearts by the illuminating and regenerating power of the Holy Ghost through the Word and sacraments, preliminary to His glorious revelation in the fulness of an eternal and universal kingdom in the new heavens and earth. Until He shall come again and sit upon the throne of His glory, all that we have of the kingdom is the Holy Ghost, working through the means of grace, gathering together the congregation of believers, and sanctifying individual hearts in the Church militant, whose calling is to believe, toil, and wait, amid affliction, sorrow, and widowhood, until the blessed Lord and Bridegroom shall come again in power and great glory. To this Church, in His personal absence, the Saviour's principal interest and attention were given as the time approached for His return to the Father. This was the object of His concern and the special topic of His conversation during those forty days.

Nor can any one be like Christ, or in harmony with His mind, and not be specially anxious with reference to the present Church. It is in this, and in the things that make the Church, and in its holy

ministrations and fellowship, that we now have to do with the kingdom of God. Whatever of good and glory is yet to come connects directly with our relations and dealings with this Church and with the Word and sacraments committed to it. Just as the Saviour withdraws into heaven, the Church comes forward as the divine incorporation of His gifts, graces, and saving dominion over the souls of men. Next to Christ Himself, it is the most necessary and important thing for our redemption; and He has even incorporated Himself with it, making it His body for the calling, regeneration, and preparation of His elect for their heavenly destiny. It is now the ordained medium of our union and communion with our Lord until He comes. And to refuse to have to do with His Church and its services and duties, or to neglect and despise it, is to refuse to do with Christ and His kingdom, and to separate from the only medium of His grace and salvation.

II.

The duty of the Church by reason of Christ's departure into heaven He Himself pointedly and distinctly laid down before leaving it.

He "commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father" until they should be baptized with the Holy Ghost and receive power from on high. Of all places on earth, Jerusalem was at that time the least inviting to these disciples. Where the people had risen up in their malignity, and all classes united to put the Lord to death, was not a place for His

followers to be at ease. To stay where everybody views you with suspicion and distrust, to see in every countenance the expressions of hatred and contempt, to be exposed at every turn to ruffian assaults or public arrest, is not what ordinary humanity would like. But there these disciples were commanded to remain and wait. There was still God's temple, God's chosen place of manifestation to His people; and their business was to observe and keep themselves to God's appointments, however irksome or unpleasant. Though they should meet with imprisonment and death, at Jerusalem they were to stay and wait till the heavenly endowment came. Self-will and our own personal convenience are not the things to govern in matters pertaining to the kingdom of God. No one is left to follow his own likes or to dispose of himself as he pleases. Our business is to do and act as the Lord appoints and commands. The whole company of the disciples were to wait at Jerusalem, and not to depart from thence. They were not to see the kingdom there set up as they had been dreaming, but there they were to witness and realize the forthcoming of divine power and grace which was to be the opening of the kingdom of heaven to all believers. They were not to separate themselves from the company of Christ's flock, nor from the place which God had chosen for the revelation of His Spirit and grace. Without this there was no promise of the Spirit's coming, no offer of the heavenly anointing for the work before them or for the honors of the kingdom.

And so God ever has His own chosen place.

house, and company in which He proposes to vouchsafe His heavenly endowments, and apart from which we have no right to count on them. The command is not to forsake the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is. We dare not separate ourselves from God's congregation or refuse to abide in waiting where His temple, Word, and ordinances are. Apart from that congregation and that waiting He does not call us to His fellowship and service, nor promise us His Spirit and grace. Whether now on the eve of restoring again the kingdom to Israel or not, we must wait upon Him in His own congregation, according to His own ordinances and appointments. The whole time of Christ's absence is the Church's waiting-time, and in fellowship with the Church is that waiting to be done, and not apart from the places He has appointed to meet and bless His people; and by this patient, prayerful, and obedient waiting it is that the heavenly baptism of the Holy Ghost comes upon men to renew, sanctify, and endow them for Himself.

But while the disciples were thus to wait and look for the Spirit, having obtained that heavenly baptism, they were to be His witnesses to all people. In the personal absence of Christ the Church on earth is His representative, to declare His Word, to minister for Him, to perpetuate and extend His cause, that the world through its testimony may believe on Him and come to salvation. Grace is not given for ourselves only, but that as we receive so we may give.

While Christ is away we are called to be His am-

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bassadors, to represent Him, to assert and uphold His claims, to stand for Him—not in His place as the Redeemer, but as His servants and messengers to tell of Him, declare His doings, triumphs, and kingdom, and to call men to believe and trust in Him as the true and only Lord and Saviour of men. This is pre-eminently the office and work of the apostles and all those who are specially chosen to partake with them in the Church's ministry; but it pertains also to every Christian. Every one who learns to know Christ, and becomes partaker of the renewing and sanctifying power of the Holy Ghost, is thereby constituted a witness for Christ. His very faith and constitution as a Christian make him a witness for Christ, an evidence and testimony of the renewing and sanctifying powers which Christ has sent, a living epistle of Christ in himself, as well as by his confession and active maintenance of Christ's cause.

The Church, inclusive of all its members, is the Lord's candlestick to hold and give the light of His salvation in a world of darkness, the pillar and pedestal of the truth to set forth Christ crucified before the eyes of all men, that they may see, believe, and live. Nor are we the true disciples of Christ without taking our share and part, according to our places and opportunities, in giving this testimony for Christ and diligently using our means and powers to sustain, perpetuate, and extend His Gospel and the preaching of Him to all people. And for this we indeed need the Holy Ghost all the more, and therefore should ever seek, wait, and pray for that

heavenly power and grace, that we may be true to our Lord and ever faithful in the holy office to which we are called and consecrated.

III.

But in the ascension itself we have much comfort and blessed assurance.

Though it shows us the Saviour corporeally removed from the earth, and no longer to be found here as a temporal Lord and King, it shows Him entering heaven in a true human nature, as our own elder brother, and lifted to the very throne of God in our common humanity.

Of what exaltation, then, is this nature of ours susceptible? If He could go into heaven as a man, and take His seat at the right hand of Eternal Majesty as a man, why may not other men go there through Him, and be made partakers of a like glory by means of relationship to Him as our representative and Saviour? And since He has attained to such honor and glory, how readily may we believe and rest on His word of promise, that where He is there shall we be also!

Though it shows us the clouds receiving Him away from earthly sight, so that we can no more see Him with the bodily eyes, it shows those clouds as wagons that bear to heavenly glory. Clouds there ever are to obscure and darken our earthly vision, but the ascension shows us the blessed Jesus in them and our nature being borne by them to heavenly exaltation and dominion. We are apt to tremble and sink when we enter into clouds, but they were char-

iots to Christ to carry Him to heaven, and they have a similar office for us. More blessings often come to us in clouds than in the clear sky. The apostles and all saints can attest this. The clouds of their affliction carried them all the higher. And who has not observed how clouds serve to lift him heavenward—how the very things most lamented turn out to be the means of bearing aloft over the dust and degradation of this world? What darker cloud do we find than that of death? Yet to what superior peace and rest does it convey the saint! Instead of being distressed and disheartened when the clouds come, we should rather be thanking God that now begins the heavenward ascension. Our Saviour is in them. They may obscure our vision, but they are loaded with divine treasure. They may intercept our earthly sight, but they bear upward to the seats of glory. Yea, our light affliction, which endureth but for a moment, worketh a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory to them that love God, to the called according to His purpose.

The ascension of Christ is also a blessed demonstration to us of what is to be expected by the true and faithful in the end. Whatever be the privations and sufferings endured in the present life, they must needs terminate in glorious exaltation and honor to the good. With all the excellence of our Saviour, there was no sorrow like unto His sorrow. Never was a man tempted, assailed, wronged, persecuted, and afflicted as He, or put to a more dreadful grief. But, withal, He "was faithful unto Him that appointed Him." Amid the furnace of His trials He

was unflinching in His devotion and immovable in His consecration to the work given Him to do. He was faithful unto death, and when His earthly work was done and hell had accomplished its worst, there was for Him a glorious resurrection-life and a glorious lifting to the very throne of God. And for those like Him there must come a like triumph. What if we are oft sorely tried, wronged, and oppressed? If we be true to God and duty, we shall not be the losers. He who rules in the heavens will not forget us; "for even hereunto were we called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example that we should follow His steps" (2 Pet. 2: 19–21). Suffering with Him, we shall also be glorified with Him. And lest we should grow weary and faint, we are directed to consider Him who endured such contradiction of sinners, looking unto Jesus, "who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God" (Heb. 12: 2, 3). In Him is shown what we may expect. As He lives, we shall live also. As the doors of heaven opened for His reception and welcome, so shall they likewise open for us. If only we are faithful there remains a crown of life for us too.

And this going away of Christ is the earnest, forepledge, and beginning of a glorious consummation of all things. It shows the appointed Saviour instated in heavenly dominion, able to fulfil all His promises, and entered upon a divine authority under which everything must be brought into subjection to Him. This was the thought which specially filled

the minds of the angels that stood lingering by the path by which He ascended, as they said, "Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus which is taken up from you into heaven shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven." What did they mean but that now the day of full redemption was made certain and sure—that He who had thus entered upon His heavenly glory would now certainly come again in that same power and dominion to turn the kingdom of grace into the kingdom of glory, to complete the redemption of the purchased possession, to fulfil all the promises of God and all the prayers of saints, to make things on earth as they are in heaven? Not a thing to be sorry for, but to be glad over, was their conception of the matter. What might otherwise be looked upon as a bereavement, to them was a joy that should swallow up all the believer's sorrow. Hence also the witnesses of what had transpired "returned to Jerusalem with great joy, and were continually in the temple, praising and blessing God" (Luke 24 : 52, 53). It was the crowning of their hopes now, full-pledged and on the way to complete fulfilment. And in that ascension we now may see and know that the kingdom will come, and that the whole purpose of God in Christ Jesus must verily succeed. A long waiting-time might intervene. The full day might yet be at a distance. But herein was the assurance that Christ must reign to the putting down of all enemies and the giving of the kingdom to them that are His. Yes—

Now our heavenly Aaron enters,
With His blood, within the veil;
Joshua is come to Canaan,
And the kings before Him quail;
Now He plants the tribes of Israel
In their promised resting-place;
Now our great Elijah offers
Double portion of His grace.

He has raised our human nature
In the clouds to God's right hand;
Now we sit in heavenly places,
Now with Him in glory stand:
Jesus reigns, adored by angels;
Man with God is on the throne;
Mighty Lord! in thine ascension
We by faith behold our own.

And what now remains to us but to fix our hearts upon Him where He is, to ascend with Him in soul and moral aspiration, and to "occupy" here on earth till He come? It is ours to think of Him as our Advocate in heaven, arranging and making ready that kingdom prepared for us from the foundation of the world. And how, indeed, shall we best order ourselves, but firmly to believe on Him, keep joyfully to His commands and directions, and to abide in holy communion with Himself in His sacred ordinances, that we may be found of Him in peace, without spot, and blameless? To this, then, let us be all the more animated in that we see and know of a surety that He ever lives in heaven, our enthroned and everlasting Saviour and Friend.

Sunday after Ascension.

1 Pet. 4:7–11: Be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer. And above all things have fervent charity among yourselves: for charity shall cover the multitude of sins. Use hospitality one to another without grudging. As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God; if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth: that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

AVING spoken at large to his scattered brethren of the great possessions they had in Christ and their Christian calling, and of their position and duties in relation to an unsanctified and hostile world, the apostle here gives them directions with regard to the regulation of themselves as members of the Church and of one another.

He assumes that the people to whom he is writing are members of the Church—that they have purified their souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit, being born again of the incorruptible seed of the Word, and built up as living stones upon the Rock, Christ Jesus, into a spiritual house, a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people, to show forth the praises of Him who had

called them out of darkness into His marvellous light. This he contemplates as the intent of the administrations and operations of grace in this world, and as the proper and necessary result of living faith. He never once conceived of being in a state of grace apart from consociation with believers in the common observances of the Gospel and in mutual fellowship with each other as members of the one recognized and well-known household of faith.

On this point there is a very wide difference between the views and teachings of the apostles and the ideas to which many now give place. The doctrine then was, that outside of what we call the Church, and apart from those acts of confession, Baptism and public identification with the Lord's people, by which men come into Church connection and fellowship, there was no right Christianity and no promise of salvation. With many the doctrine now is, that the Church is very little; that the sacraments have no vital place in the economy of grace; that one can be just as good and hopeful a Christian outside of the Church, without public confession of Christ, without Baptism, without Communion in the Holy Supper, without coming under the restraints and obligations of church-membership, and that if we are only what people call "good," there is no doubt of our getting to heaven. They confound Christianity with morality, and degrade God's economy of salvation into a mere goodishness which may coexist with any system of religion, supposing that if they maintain a general uprightness of behavior,

neighborly charitableness, and good citizenship nothing more can be required. They are at a loss to see what it can matter whether they just believe and confess this or that particular doctrine or not—whether they are baptized or unbaptized—whether they attend public worship or consult their own ease and pleasure on that subject. With them, being identified with any particular Church is nothing, if only they live up to their own notions of right. Indeed, they can see no difference between conformity to the moral teachings and rules of some secular order and being a church-member. But to the inspired apostles and the teachings of the Scriptures throughout a man's religion was considered bastard and spurious if it did not bring him into the common fellowship of believers, or did not connect vitally with the constituted Church of Christ, or did not live and move and have its being in openly confessing and exemplifying the specific Christian faith, observing the Christian ordinances, and maintaining recognition and membership in the communion of saints. Failing in this, no promise or hope was given on which to count himself of the household of faith or as having share in the forgiving and saving grace of God. Nor is there a man or woman living, to whom the Gospel is preached, who has come to his or her right place or position while standing aloof from identification with Christ's confessing Church. The text assumes this as one of the fundamental things involved in the common Christian Creed. The apostle is giving directions for the regulation of life *in the Church*, and his words

are an address without application or meaning if it does not pertain to all proper people to be in the Church as confessed and acknowledged members of it.

Let us, then, devoutly consider the apostolic directions, praying God to guide and help us in our meditations.

I. The first thing mentioned is *sound-minded soberness unto prayer.*

To grasp the precise meaning of the apostle we must take in the preceding statement, which gives the reason and motive of this particular duty. The unbroken sentence reads, "*The end of all things is at hand:* be ye *therefore* sober and watch unto prayer." The true position of the Church in this world is that of expectancy and waiting, like that of a bride-elect looking for the return of her betrothed for the wedding. Christ has been here arranging all the preliminaries. His ascension to the right hand of the Father as Head over all things to the Church is to make ready for the great consummation, and then to return in power and great glory to take His Bride to Himself, and to make an end of this whole present order of things. And to this return of the ascended Saviour and ending up of this present dispensation the apostle refers when he says, "*The end of all things is at hand.*"

It is a mistake to suppose that the end spoken of is merely the end of earthly trials and sorrows; nor is it the impending destruction of Jerusalem, except as that was a sort of prelibation of a far greater and more general judgment of the whole world; and

still less the termination of individual life by death. Solemn as death is, and completely as it ends a man's connection with the affairs and interests of this world, individual mortality is but little used in the New Testament as a motive to Christian duty, and can by no means be construed into "the end of all things." The end in contemplation is the end of the whole present economy and condition of human affairs, which is constantly spoken of in connection with the coming again of the Lord Jesus. Calvin rightly says: "The end he speaks of is not merely that of each several individual, but the entire renovation of the world, as if he had said that Christ will shortly come and put an end to all things as they now are. . . . Moreover, it must be held as a first principle that ever since the appearing of Christ there is nothing left to believers but with wakeful minds to be always intent on His second advent."

The fact that the apostle speaks of this "end" as near at hand is in entire accord with the usual expressions on the subject. Christ had repeatedly said that of the times and seasons no one knew or could know, but that Christians should ever keep themselves on the watch and in continual expectancy of it as a thing impending and liable to occur at any time. As involving the great and most blessed hope of God's people, and as the chief motive for them to keep themselves in constant dutifulness and fidelity, the uncertain imminency of Christ's return is everywhere affirmed by Christ Himself and His apostles, and never suffered to pass out of view. Paul did not know until the last that that day might not come

in his lifetime, and the same is true of Peter. Hence all the allusions to the subject contemplate it as near at hand. The word everywhere is, "Watch, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh" (Matt. 25 : 13). And it is in view of that great day and its possible coming at any time that the injunction to all Christians was and is, "Be ye therefore sober and watch unto prayer;" that is, *Be sound-minded, discreet, prudent, considerate, and sober unto prayer.*

The *sound mind* referred to stands opposed to the manifold insanities, vagaries, and extravagances of unrenewed human nature. The same word is used respecting the recovered demoniac of Gadara, who, when redeemed from his madness and hellish tormentors, sat calm and thoughtful at the feet of his divine Deliverer. "It implies a discernment of the differences of things, as of the comparative value of things present and things to come, and of the choice of the more excellent." And what else is added in the precept further explains the same general condition—"the keeping of the mind and heart clear from the bewildering and benumbing fumes of worldly excess and dissipation of every kind," considering that the day of the great consummation may dawn at any hour.

"*In order to the prayers*"—that is, that due attention may be given to the prayers and devotions of the Church and of Christian life in general. The apostle assumes that Christian life is a prayerful life—that prayers and devotions of all sorts, public and private, abound with every believer; and this con

siderateness, sobriety, and circumspect self-possession is to be cultivated and maintained, that our necessary prayerfulness and devotions may not be hindered, disabled, or displaced. The whole direction, taken together, embraces the exact spirit and substance of the Saviour's own command: "Take heed to yourselves lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares; for as a snare it shall come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth. Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man" (Luke 21: 34–36).

Nor is it possible for any Christian to be truly awake to his position, to fill out the duties of his calling, and to be in right attitude as a true believer without strict and vigilant attention to what is thus so solemnly enjoined. Having turned from his idolatries and sins to serve the living God, and taken upon him the profession of a Christian, his next and pre-eminent business is to wait and look for the coming of the Saviour—to keep his eye upon the great and nearing consummation as his hope against all disability and sorrow, and with soberness of mind and prayerfulness of heart to be diligent, that the coming Lord may find him in peace, without spot, and blameless.

This, then, is the first direction for a true and proper life in the Church.

II. The second is, *the cultivation of fervent charity*

and love one to another—"Above all things being fervent in your love among yourselves."

It was sage advice and precaution which Joseph gave to his brethren as he sent them back with wagons and provisions and raiment and silver to bring their father, their families, and their effects down into Egypt, saying, "*See that ye fall not out by the way*" (Gen. 45 : 24). A common adversity tends to drive men together and to unite them peaceably with one another; but human nature is such a perverse and inflammable thing that when prosperity and promotion come and matters begin to look up, all kinds of alienation, jealousy, and disagreement are liable to be developed, and grace itself has hard work to keep them down. Church-people have to do with the same touchy, crabbed, and resentful humanity found everywhere else. Genuine piety tends to keep it in check, to soften and modify selfish passion, to dispose the heart to kindness, forbearance, brotherliness, and love, and ought to conquer and drive out from the soul every ill spirit; but envy, resentment, and vain jangling are apt to creep in nevertheless. It is one of the most difficult things in the world to keep even Christian people in harmony and peace with each other and in true brotherly accord and loving sympathy and co-operation. There is a sort of needs be that offences must come, but woe unto him through whom they come! There is no justification or excuse for those associated around the same altar to be at variance with each other, "provoking one another, envying one another," or in any other relations than those of peace and amity. Where

such refuse to have to do with one another, and can find it in their hearts to nurse spite, resentment, dislike, and hatred one toward the other, there is something radically wrong. Christians must be considerate of Christians, and have a kindly interest in each other because they are fellow-Christians, or their own Christianity is at fault, and grace has not yet done its full work in their hearts.

The text assumes that Christians do and must love one another. This is also a fundamental requirement on which John is very pointed and strong. He speaks it out in plain words, that "If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar; for he that loveth not his brother, whom he hath seen, how can he love God, whom he hath not seen?" (1 John 4: 20). Though that brother may lack in the qualities we would naturally esteem and fancy, yet because he is a child and servant of God, for God's sake we must still love him. This does not mean that we must take him into our most intimate confidence and closest friendship; but we cannot be true and proper Christians if we are not willing to acknowledge and treat as brethren those whom God has taken to be His sons. It is not wrong to censure wrong, or to discountenance what is bad, or to give one's voice and influence to correct what is ill and offensive; but there is a Christian way of doing it, considering one's own deficiencies, and being careful to do unto others as we would that they should do unto us.

There is nothing like charity and mutual forbearance to oil the machinery of human society. Peter says "charity covers the multitude of sins." It keeps

back a multitude which would otherwise come forth in great rankness. It does not unmake sins, but it turns the eyes from them, apologizes for defects, and treats the rose according to its flower and not according to its thorns. Like an artist who would take the picture of a deformed face, it takes its impression from the best side, not from the worst. And if we are not willing to exercise forbearance, forgiveness, and reasonable friendliness toward our fellow-Christians, we may be very sure that God holds us responsible for it, and that we are not standing as well with Him as we would fain hope.

But the point in the apostle's words goes farther. It is not simply that church-members are to live in charity with one another, and work together in mutual interest and love, but that this mutual affection is to be *fervent, intense.* "Have *fervent* charity among yourselves." A cold, formal, distant, and heartless interest and regard does not meet the case. We are not only not to "bite and devour one another"—not only to avoid "debates, envyings, wraths, strifes, backbitings, whisperings, swellings, tumults," and what is in the line to break up fellowship, concord, and good feeling—not only to "lay aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil-speakings,"—but we must cherish and exercise a true family interest for all who are of the household of faith, taking in all and discarding none. Not all are equally lovable and attractive, and some may be anything but a credit, comfort, and satisfaction to us; yet toward those who please us least and most provoke our criticism and dislike there

must be sufficient living principle and grace in us to endure what we cannot remedy, and not allow ourselves to be thrown out of temper and place because the likeness to Jesus is so dim in some. And even when it is proven to us that this or that one despises and hates us, the direction still is, "If thine *enemy* hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink;" and if he come to thee in need of shelter, give him hospitality without grudging; for Christians must have charity among themselves.

This, then, is the second injunction of the holy apostle.

III. A still further direction for the proper regulation of church-life is, *the faithful and conscientious use of individual gifts for the common benefit.*

The apostle assumes again that every member of the Church has some gift of one kind or another. God's gifts to individual Christians are of many sorts and degrees. They include natural endowments, what has been developed or acquired by education, special aptitudes for particular work, means of influence, and common talents, as well as extraordinary or marked operations and graces of the Holy Ghost, who distributeth to every one severally as He will. Hence Paul says, "There are diversities of gifts" and "differences of administrations."

The body of the Church is made up like the body of a man, and consists of many different members, with differences of functions and diversities of comeliness and honor, but all having their several places and offices, and all joined together for the common welfare of the whole corporation to which they all

alike belong. Some are men and some are women; some are rich and some are poor; some are high in cultivation and rank and some are lowly in attainment and place; some have many talents and some have few talents; and there is scarcely an end to the variety of endowments, possessions, and individual gifts of the various members, great and small, of which the Church of Christ is made up. But there is not one without his or her particular gift, place, and office.

Nor are any of these gifts bestowed or possessed for the honor, enjoyment, gratification, and separate profit of the individuals who have them. As people belong to the Church, so all their particular gifts belong to the Church and are divinely bestowed for the service and benefit of the Church. As the separate powers of the head, the hands, the feet, the eyes, the ears, and all of the other members of the body are given and possessed for each other and for the whole body together, so all the separate gifts and powers of individual members of the Church are given and possessed for mutual services to each other and to the entire body as a whole. Every member of the Church is a steward, and has been entrusted with his or her particular gifts and talents, whether great or small, under charge to use and minister them in orderly place as the need and opportunity present. And as each has received, so each is to minister the same, according to the grace and opportunity given, "as good stewards of the manifold grace of God." An individual is a church-member not only for himself or herself, but for the Church as well. If we

have come to saving faith, it is that we may make confession of it for the general encouragement and benefit, that the same faith and confession may be upheld, perpetuated, and made the possession of others also. And whatever our particular gifts, graces, possessions, or means of influence may be, they are entrusted to us as God's almoners and stewards to be faithfully used, exercised, and appropriated by us for the best interests of the whole cause as God in His providence may open the way and furnish opportunity.

It thus becomes the bounden duty of every true member of the Church devoutly to examine into the gifts, talents, adaptabilities, and means of usefulness and good-doing which God has vouchsafed to him, and to find out how and where he can be of service and become the instrument in the divine hands in helping on the cause of God and salvation, begetting and strengthening believers, and ministering to the common welfare of the household of faith. Young men need to inquire conscientiously as to whether they have not been brought to faith and hope in Christ to the end that they may become ministers of the Word and sacraments, and serve their Lord and the Church in the sacred office. People of education and culture and social influence need to look seriously at their advantages and powers, and to search out how they may be of the greatest force and living benefit to the interests of the religion they profess and in which they have found the peace and hope of salvation. Young people in selecting spheres of action and forming alliances for life are not at

liberty to follow their own fancies, but have need to consider well what they are doing, and make sure that they are bestowing and appropriating themselves the best they can to make the most of themselves and their capacities, not simply for their own comfort and satisfaction in this world, but for the service and glory of that Saviour through whom they are looking for eternal life. Active men of business and in professional pursuits need to ask themselves for honest answer what they are aiming at, what it is that they are so absorbingly devoting all their time and energies for, what they are endeavoring to accomplish or secure, and whether the same is within the range of what pertains to a true and devoted servant of the Lord Jesus. Rich people and those who have ample means at their command need to question their souls closely as to why they are hoarding or expending as they do, and whether they are handling and using their wealth for the highest honor and glory of that God who says that the gold and the silver are His, and who demands that men shall honor Him with their substance as well as with the homage of their hearts. Those who are heads of families and in positions of authority need to make it a subject of deep concern as to whether they are exercising their powers, using their places, and directing their course in the interests of virtue, the furtherance of righteousness, the upbuilding of Christ's cause, and the spiritual good of those who look to them and are so much dependent upon them. And all who have the qualifications for usefulness in any way are under bonds to their Lord to seek out

places, spheres, and opportunities in which to serve Him and do something to His praise.

And when people see and know where and how they can be of service in the helping forward of the common cause of grace and salvation, it is each one's solemn duty as a Christian to use, minister, and appropriate his or her gifts and powers to the full extent of them as good and wise stewards. If any one speaks—whether in public or private, whether in prophesying, teaching, or exhortation, whether in office or as a private individual—he is to speak as the oracles of God; that is, he is to speak truly, with a view to edify the body of Christ, according to what the Holy Ghost saith, and with that humility, fidelity, and reverence which pertain to one who speaks for God. If any one ministers in any capacity, he is to do it as a true servant of the Church. And whether it be as pastor, ruler, dispenser of alms, or in more private ways, it must be according to the full ability and power which God has bestowed; for it is all God's gift to His Church, for which no credit or honor is due to the ministrant. And whatever the gift, service, or ministration may be, the ability to minister it and all that is ministered have their spring-head in the divine goodness and mercy, and are so entirely His possessions, given us to be ministered in His name and for Him, that we make ourselves guilty of malfeasance and treachery if we do not act up to the full measure of our ability and opportunity in the execution of the solemn and momentous trust.

This, then, is the third point in the apostle's direction.

But why all this special counsel for the regulation of ourselves as members of the Church? The reasons are stated, and they furnish an ample justification for the apostle's anxiety, as well as ample motive for an earnest taking to heart of his words.

Foremost of all stands the momentous fact that "the end of all things is at hand." The day of the Lord is stealing on as a thief in the night, in the which the heavens shall pass, the elements melt, and this whole world wilt down under the great judgment-fires. Jesus says: "In such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh" (Matt. 24 : 44). And if He should come and find us out of place, undutiful, and unfaithful, all benefit of our religion would be lost. Entering the Church, we agree to become the Lord's servants, pledged to use all His gifts and graces to the best interests of His cause in this world, bound to give account for the same at His coming. And badly must we then fare if we are not faithful, wise, and true in our stewardship according to the ability which God giveth. Jesus Himself says that if any of His servants shall say in their hearts, My Lord delayeth His coming, and shall begin to smite their fellow-servants, and to eat and drink with the drunken, spending their time and talents upon their own passions, pleasures, and follies, their Lord shall come in a day when they do not expect Him, and shall cut them off and appoint them their portion with hypocrites and unbelievers. And if we would not be surprised and overwhelmed by the great day of God, and would stand approved and safe when His judgments strike in upon this

wicked world, we need to be continually on the watch and to exert ourselves with unslacking diligence, as the apostle here enjoins.

And higher still stands the unalterable obligation of every creature, in all things, to honor, praise, and glorify God. He made us; He has redeemed us through His only Son; He has bought us with the price of sacred blood; from Him we have derived all that we are and have and hope; and to Him belongs all the glory, the praise, and the dominion for ever and ever. All things that pertain to us as men and as Christians are of God and for God, through Jesus Christ, and are to be consecrated to the glorifying and praise of Him every day and every hour that we live; consecrated to Him in sound-minded soberness unto prayer, in the cultivation and maintenance of peace, love, and fervent charity toward one another, and in the faithful and conscientious use of all our gifts, possessions, and powers for the furtherance of the cause with which all our precious hopes and eternal salvation are bound up. The sole business of all holy creatures is, without cessation, weariness, or end, to use everything pertaining to their being and estate to bring glory, praise, and dominion to the eternal Lord of all; and it cannot be any less our business if we would be recognized, approved, and blessed as the servants and worshippers of Him who was, and is, and is to come.

Whitsunday.

Acts 2 : 1–13: And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place.

And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting.

And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them.

And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.

And there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven.

Now when this was noised abroad, the multitude came together, and were confounded, because that every man heard them speak in his own language.

And they were all amazed, and marvelled, saying one to another, Behold, are not all these which speak, Galileans? and how hear we every man in our own tongue wherein we were born? Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, and in Judea, and Cappadocia, in Pontus, and Asia, Phrygia, and Pamphylia, in Egypt, and in the parts of Libya about Cyrene, and strangers of Rome, Jews and proselytes, Cretes and Arabians, we do hear them speak in our tongues the wonderful works of God.

And they were all amazed, and were in doubt, saying one to another, What meaneth this? Others mocking, said, These men are full of new wine.

PENTECOST is one of the oldest religious festivals observed on earth. Its annual celebration began five hundred years before Homer sung and a still longer time before Romulus collected his robber-band on the banks of

the Tiber. For thirty-and-three centuries it has now been kept—fifteen centuries as a Hebrew festival, and more than eighteen centuries as a Christian feast. It obtained the name of *Pentecost* from the fact that it always falls on the fiftieth day after the Sabbath following the Paschal solemnities. The Jews observed it as a joyous thanksgiving, when they offered the first-fruits of their harvests, and also as the anniversary of the giving of the law from Mount Sinai and the founding of the theocracy. Christians observe it in glad commemoration of that marvellous manifestation from heaven which marked the first Pentecost after the death and resurrection of Christ, which brought upon His disciples the first-fruits of His exaltation to heavenly glory, rewrote the law on the tables of believers' hearts, and inaugurated the new dispensation of which the Old-Testament observances were only "a figure for the time then present."

Next to the incarnation, death, and resurrection of the Son of God, the outpouring of the Holy Ghost was one of the most momentous facts in human history. It was the crowning of a new epoch in the dispensations of God toward our world. And if the ancient Pentecost was the joy of the law, the Christian Pentecost is the still sublimer joy of redemption from the law's penalty and the impartation of a new and spiritual life-standing to all believers in Jesus.

The forming Church of Christ had received its commission to go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature, but its apostolic leaders were to tarry at Jerusalem for the fulfilment of the

promise from the Father to endow them with power from on high. They waited as directed, and our Epistle Lesson graphically describes what happened. A new spiritual potency broke into our world, destined to be felt to its utmost boundaries. The special ministration of the third Person in the ever-adorable Trinity came into full activity. A great miracle was wrought, bearing with it a retinue of miracles. Temporarily or in limited measure the Holy Ghost had visited and operated in the world before. He spake by the prophets and wrought in many hearts, imparting many precious gifts to God's servants. But now He came to abide with the Church, and to be in it ever as a principle of light, life, and power, the Generator of a vast series of divine manifestations in history. There had been ministrations of God *toward* men; in Christ there were ministrations of God *for* and *among* men; and through the miracle of Pentecost there came into force a more vigorous ministration of God *in* men, to lift and transform humanity and to be an everlasting Helper of our joy.

In treating further of this blessed wonder we may note,

I. Some of its Circumstantial Facts;
II. Some of its Glorious Fruits.

And may that selfsame Spirit which proceedeth from the Father and the Son illuminate and quicken our understandings rightly to apprehend and apply the truth!

I. Some of the Circumstantial Facts.

The scene of this marvellous occurrence was at Jerusalem, for it was there that the feast of Pentecost was celebrated by the Jewish people. That had been the centre of worship for more than a thousand years. Since David's time this had been unchanged. And there the apostles were to tarry until baptized with the Holy Ghost, as from that point the word of salvation was to go forth. The exact spot where the Spirit was poured out cannot be identified. It was in some private house, and some upper room like that in which the Saviour ate the last Passover and instituted the Holy Supper. Most likely it was in that selfsame apartment.

The persons present were first and certainly all the apostles; but with them, most likely, were also "the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and His brethren," making "the number of the names together about an hundred and twenty," as described in the preceding chapter. Cornelius subsequently received the Holy Ghost the same as the apostles at the first. Peter explained this marvellous scene as a fulfilment of the promise: "On my servants *and on my handmaidens* I will pour out my Spirit." It would thus seem an undue restriction for us to suppose the Pentecostal outpouring of the Holy Ghost confined to the twelve. But there is no warrant to suppose that any more than the hundred and twenty were present to share the heavenly impartation on that particular occasion. The gift was to be the perpetual possession of the Church, and these hundred

and twenty persons then were the entire representative Church.

It was Sunday morning, the fiftieth day after the resurrection of Christ, the exact day of the Pentecostal feast, that these believers "were all with one accord in one place." It was not a casual meeting, but one agreed upon and appointed. All understood it, and all accorded together in it with one and the same intent and devotion. There is nothing like the assembling of the saints together in waiting upon the Lord and in uniting their prayers around the Word and promises of God. No one can tell what grace and blessing he may miss by being absent from the sacred appointments of the Church. Any believers who were not present at this time failed to share in the transcendent grace which there came upon this little worshipping assembly.

During the first hour of prayer, about nine o'clock, unusual signs manifested themselves in that room, heralding the fulfilment of the Saviour's promise. There is a mysterious sympathy between the physical and moral worlds. The same God reigns in both, and every great epoch in history, especially in the history of the kingdom of God, is preceded or accompanied by some extraordinary manifestations in nature. When the law was given there were "thunders and lightnings, and the voice of the trumpet exceeding loud." When the Christ was crucified there was darkness over all the land for three hours; the earth trembled when He died; and when He arose from the dead there was a great earthquake, and the rocks rent. And so in this instance

also. A new moral creation was about to begin. The Spirit of God, which brooded over chaos at the birth of the material world, was about to come forth for a new and superior genesis, and corresponding signs appeared.

In the conversation with Nicodemus the Saviour had likened the motions and operations of the Spirit to wind; and here "suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting." It was not wind, but "*a sound*," as if a tempestuous rush of the atmosphere were pouring down from the sky. It was heard alike in every part of the house. The chief wonder of it was the sound as of such a violent rushing of wind where no wind was. The hurricane sound doubtless was continuous, as it was observed in all parts of the house and was reported in the city. And the violence of the seeming tempest indicated the fulness and power of what was coming.

But along with the audible wonder there soon followed another addressed to the sense of sight. There was a marvellous appearance as of a body or ball of fire, which parted into fractions, so that a portion of it, in the shape of a tongue, settled on each one present. There is nothing to show that it was fire. It did not burn anything or any one. The tongues were "tongues *like as of fire*," and not necessarily real fire. The noise of rushing wind symbolized generative life, and so this appearance of fire told of light and purification, while the shapes of the disparted flame indicated the connection of the Spirit's

offices with the use of speech. God's Word is "like as a fire," "as a burning fire in the heart;" and it is through tongues that the Spirit has ever put forth His illuminating and transforming power. Hence the significance of this sign of tongues as of fire.

And as these flaming tongues alighted on the waiting worshippers "*they were all filled with the Holy Ghost.*" The Holy Ghost is neither wind nor fire, but with these signs a calming, illuminating, and transfiguring spiritual power entered into them and set their whole being aglow. The Spirit which proceedeth from the Father and the Son took possession of their souls, glorified their thoughts, throbbed in their sympathies, lifted their nature, impelled their wills, and filled them with light, confidence, and heroism equal if not superior to that experienced by the greatest of the prophets. The eternal Spirit now thought in their thoughts, pulsated in their hearts, spoke in their utterances, and so animated them with divine life and potency that it was no longer so much they that spoke as the Holy Ghost that was in them.

This was the proper essence and sublimest feature of the great Pentecostal miracle. What else followed was only the effect and manifestation of this transcendent endowment from heaven. Henceforth these disciples were not merely enlightened in the ordinary sense, but lifted into the very centre of Christian truth and holiness, transferred into a new and supernatural sphere of mental and spiritual life, and transformed into organs of the Holy Ghost, who now dwelt in them. There was wrought in and upon

them such an act of divine inspiration as in some sort to continue the great wonder of the incarnation. The life as well as the knowledge of Christ thus continued to live and pulsate in human nature, and a sacred influence was communicated to all the thoughts, feelings, actions, speech, and writings of those who partook of the heavenly gift. It was the divine equipment of the infant Church for its holy offices.

> Swiftly and straight each tongue of flame
> Through cloud and breeze unwavering came,
> And darted to its place of rest
> On some meek brow, of Jesus blest.
> Nor fades it yet, that living gleam,
> And still those lambent lightnings stream;
> Where'er God's truth is, there are they;
> They light His altar every day,
> In every heart that gives them room
> Zeal to inflame and sin consume.

Observe now,

II. Some of its Glorious Fruits.

First of all, it opened the mouths of these disciples to testify for Christ. They all believed in Jesus as their divine Lord and Saviour, but up to this time they were very timid and scarcely dared to let their faith be known. They carefully hid away in private upper rooms lest they should be molested by the Jews and dealt with as their Lord had been. They were but a little handful of first-fruits, bleeding and sorrowful in soul over the removal of their Saviour from their fond embrace, and they shrank and huddled together in remote places, like sheep conscious

of the nearness of the wolf, and locked the doors for very fear. But now the promised Comforter had come. Another Spirit had entered into them and taken up abode in their souls. They saw and felt as never before. Light and clearness and confidence and courage, as if a lion heart had been given them, they now possessed. That promise of the Father had been fulfilled in which it was said, "Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy." And their tongues were loosed to speak boldly for Jesus as the Prince of life and the King of salvation. He was the Christ. Notwithstanding the persecution, suffering, and shameful death which He had endured, He was alive again. He had ascended to heaven, was accepted of the Father, and exalted to the right hand of eternal Majesty. He had led captivity captive and obtained gifts for men. He had found favor and place upon the throne in glory, and had shed forth this glorious and transfiguring endowment upon them. And they could no longer hide the blessed light under a bushel or under a bed. They must let it forth. Their tongues could not keep quiet any longer. The electric fire direct from God had set all their nature aflame, and they had to give utterance and vent to the blazing fire of joy and triumph that now burned within them. What was the malignity of the unbelieving Jews or all the opposition and resentfulness of the world to that invincible and transforming truth of salvation in Christ Jesus which now rejoiced and swelled and impelled them? Let death and persecution come, they must speak and testify, and obey the impulses which had pos-

session of them. As Paul once said, "Woe unto me if I preach not the Gospel!" so they all felt, and at once began to declare and proclaim what was now so gloriously present to their souls. And without any further fear, hesitation, or reserve "they began to speak."

What they spoke may be learned from the sketch given of Peter's answer to the mocking Jews. The centre of all was Jesus—His spotless life, His wondrous deeds, His cruel murder, His glorious resurrection, His ascension to the right hand of the Father, His enthronement as the Lord and Giver of life, who now, according to the Scriptures, had sent forth the Holy Ghost as thus manifested to all beholders. Nor is there anything to open the mouths of men for the preaching and defence of Christ, or to inflame their hearts and tongues with sacred eloquence, like the experience of the renewing and saving grace vouchsafed through Him.

But with the opening of the disciples' mouths boldly to testify for their Lord and Saviour there came a wonderful enlargement of their powers of speech. They not only began to speak with a courage and confidence never before experienced, but they were miraculously enabled to call to their aid the use of divers languages, so as to speak to every listener in his own mother-tongue. There were present at that high festival many Jews and proselytes who had been brought up in distant regions, where other languages were used than those which the first disciples had learned. Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and dwellers in Mesopotamia, Egypt-

ians, Libyans, Romans, Cretes, and Arabians, were present, and to all these the disciples were enabled to speak in that tongue in which they severally had been brought up. Nor was it the least of the wonders which marked this great occurrence that all the hearers who came together to observe and inquire concerning it were compelled to acknowledge to the hearing of these Galileans speak in their several native languages, testifying in all these tongues the wonderful works of God.

It would be difficult to find a more astonishing miracle than this. When Christ gave hearing and speech to the deaf and dumb man whose ears He opened and whose tongue He loosed, He wrought a great wonder; but it gave command of but one language. Here was the sudden bestowment of the mastery of many languages upon a whole company. "The apostles were illiterate men, who understood no language but that of their own country, and could speak it only according to the rude dialect of Galilee. They had never thought of learning the languages of foreigners; and it is probable that even the names of some of the nations mentioned had not reached their ears. Yet in a moment were those men inspired with the knowledge of an immense number of words which they had never heard before, and with the knowledge not only of the words, but of the connected ideas and of the structure, the arrangement, and the peculiar phrases of the languages to which they belonged. At the same time their organs were rendered capable of adapting themselves to sounds different from each other, as well as from

those to which they had been familiarized from their infancy. Notwithstanding this diversity, there was not the smallest confusion in their minds, nor were they in danger of mixing the words of different languages together; but they spoke each distinctly, as if they had been acquainted with it alone" (Dick *in loc.*).

Whether the same languages were imparted to all alike, or the knowledge of some to one and of others to others, is not stated. The Holy Ghost divides His gifts to every one severally as He will; but among them the ability to use the different tongues necessary to the making known of the truth plainly to all hearers was given as a direct and miraculous endowment of God through the outpouring of the Holy Ghost. Christ Himself had said to His chosen apostles that the works He did they should do also, and even greater works than He did, because He was going to the Father (John 14:12); and here were those greater works than Christ did in His earthly lifetime, even the fluent and effective use of languages which they had never learned. A special testimony to the honor and power to which He had now attained was thus given in that He enabled His apostles, when absent from them, to do what He Himself never did when present with them. Had they been strangers newly come to Jerusalem, there might have been some question as to the reality of so great a miracle; but they were known to the people at Jerusalem, and had been long and specially noticed as the followers of Him who had so lately been crucified among them. The absence of any

literary culture, the lowliness of their condition, and their want of opportunity to attain the mastery of foreign tongues in any ordinary way, were so well known that they were on this account but little respected. All the more evident, therefore, was it that here was a transcendent demonstration of the divine glory and power of that Jesus to whom these men thus testified. He who made man's mouth and gave him the use of language from the first, could be at no loss to impart this marvellous endowment. They personally needed it for the execution of the commission they had received. It was to them a further guarantee and assurance of their calling to go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature, and it inspired them with the greater courage and joy in entering on their work. It was also something of a prophetic demonstration to them of the universality of the new dispensation, and that the testimony of Jesus was to be heard and His praise celebrated by all nations, peoples, and tongues. And for the time then present it was one of the most powerful and convincing proofs of the truth and reality of what they preached and testified.

And as a still further fruit of this great Pentecostal outpouring of the Spirit the little forming Church of Christ was wonderfully quickened, strengthened, and increased. It thus obtained a mighty impulse to go forth on its mission to all the world. The shy and timid disciples rose up in the majesty of a new puissance as the heroic princes of a new dispensation, whom no powers of earth could henceforth daunt or silence. A new cause in new

forms of embodiment was now launched as a living force among men, and destined to be the perpetual conservator of the true religion and of all pure advances in morals, art, learning, science, society, civilization, liberty, and human rights. In one day an impression was made the effects of which have vibrated through all the ages since, and will be felt to the end of the world.

The Church that morning numbered about one hundred and twenty names; by evening it numbered "about three thousand souls." Soon the "men" that believed were "about five thousand." "And the Word of the Lord increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith." Persecution only helped on the triumph. "They that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the Word," carrying the Gospel throughout Judea, to Damascus, to Samaria, to Phœnicia, to Cyprus, to Antioch, and far away to the Gentiles. From the least of the nations, from a small company of its least-esteemed people, from a private upper room in Jerusalem, there went forth a living power to condition this world's history for all after time. Then and there the little republic of believers unfurled its flag and went forth conquering and to conquer, pitching its tent beside Cæsar's throne, driving the babbling Sophists from the Porch and the Academy, opening the textbook of Christianity in Corinth, Athens, and Byzantium, and marching ever on and on until its sign waved upon the banner of the mistress of the world. And if to-day the nations of the

earth are permeated with Gospel light and truth, or society at all answers to the principles of righteousness, or the hope of a blessed immortality gladdens any soul, or the spirit of faith and love dwells in any heart, or any ray of glory falls upon the grave or shines as a star of promise to our benighted world, it is all vastly owing to those Pentecostal tongues of flame which came with the noise as of a rushing mighty wind and sat upon each of those who on that occasion "were all with one accord in one place."

Every dispensation of God is important and contributes its share to the achievement of His grand purposes. Every fresh stage in history has its own particular offices in the execution of the divine plan and purposes. But there are some epochs and events which stand out in more massive grandeur than others, like great mountain-ranges which fashion the configurations of the earth. There are times when the creative Word issues, and there is a giving forth of generative power which moulds ages and affects the whole after condition of things. Of this description was the marvellous Pentecostal effusion of the Holy Ghost which this day commemorates. Eternity alone can reveal all that we, with the Church of all ages, owe to that great event. And it specially becomes us gratefully to try to profit by the unspeakable advantages which we have from it. That same Holy Ghost is perpetually with the Church, to do for all its members according to each one's need and calling. All the faith, piety, hope, and comfort in Christ that we have has come to us through the

presence and agency of that same Holy Ghost. There is no sanctification of which He is not the Author, nor can there be any progress or success in Christianity without Him to help our infirmities. It is therefore of the utmost importance to us to be on good terms with Him, to cherish His sacred teachings and impulses, and to be careful that we grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby we are sealed unto the day of redemption.

We may not hope for such a measure of the Spirit and such extraordinary endowments through the Holy Ghost as fell to the first Christians on the day of Pentecost. It is not necessary that we should, and God is not prodigal of gifts where they are not needed. But we still have vast and eternal interests in the Holy Ghost and His perpetual ministrations in the Church. The Collect for to-day thanks God for the teaching of His faithful people by sending to them the light of His Holy Spirit. We all need to be born of the Spirit, and to have the Holy Spirit as our Instructor, Helper, Sanctifier, and Comforter. We are called to holiness of life in which to develop the fruits of the Spirit. We must have the witness and seal of the Spirit to our sonship and adoption. God also declares Himself more willing to give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him than earthly parents are to give good things unto their children. But to have the Holy Ghost do all His blessed offices upon us demands meek, teachable, prayerful, and obedient hearts. He comes as a spiritual light, and we must open to that light and take it into our souls. He is in the truth, the Word, the sacraments;

and to these we must then give devout attention. He proposes to dwell in us as a Spirit of love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and temperance; and to these graces we are to give place and diligent cultivation.

> In mode far passing human thought He guides,
> Impels, instructs: intense pursuit of good,
> And cautious flight of evil, He suggests,
> But in such gentle murmurs that to know
> His heavenly voice we must have done His will.

Thus, then, through the merit and intercession of our ascended Lord and Saviour, may we all taste of the heavenly gift and likewise be filled with the Holy Ghost!

Whitmonday.

Acts 10 : 42–48 : And he commanded us to preach unto the people, and to testify that it is he which was ordained of God to be the Judge of quick and dead.

To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins.

While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word.

And they of the circumcision which believed, were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost.

For they heard them speak with tongues, and magnify God. Then answered Peter, Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we? And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord.

Then prayed they him to tarry certain days.

WHITSUNDAY commemorates the outpouring of the Holy Ghost upon the Jewish believers — Whitmonday commemorates the pouring out of the same upon the Gentiles.

For a long time after the wonderful scenes of Pentecost none but Jews and their circumcised proselytes were received into the Christian Church. "Salvation is of the Jews." The path by which it came to the world was by way of the Jewish people. Christ was a Jew, and all His apostles were Jews, and all the great Christian facts came in connection

with the Jewish system; and it required much special teaching and no little conflict before the Church of Christ began to escape from the bondage of Jewish particularism and the Jewish ritual, and came to a full consciousness of its proper independence and universality. The Gospel was the noblest outcome of the ancient dispensation, but, unlike that, it was and is intended for all people and nations. This was implied in the original promise to Adam, in the promise to Abraham, and in the teachings and anticipations of the prophets. Christ had also given command for the preaching of the Gospel to every creature and the making of disciples of all nations. Still, it was a slow and difficult work for the first Christians to divest themselves of the idea that everything had to be done in connection with the old ceremonies of the law, and that believing Gentiles needed to be circumcised and brought under the Jewish regulations. All this flowed naturally from their religious training, and had its root in a conscientious reverence for what God had appointed and ages had sanctified, and hence required the special interposition of God Himself to dislodge it. But it needed to be dislodged, and to this end certain special dispensations were providentially arranged, to which belongs the remarkable history of the conversion and baptism of Cornelius from which to-day's Epistle has been selected.

Let us, then, devoutly consider this history and the great interests which we as Christians have in it.

Cornelius was the first-fruits of faith from the heathen world. He was a Roman, a centurion, in

command of a cohort of Italian soldiers stationed in the maritime city of Cæsarea. Every attentive reader of the New Testament must have observed the honorable character of these heathen captains as they again and again appear in the Gospel history. As a class, they were among the worthiest men then to be met—honest, generous, true-hearted, and fair, beside whom the great body of the highest Jewish officials sink by comparison. This may be accounted for, in part, from the fact that the holding of such military command was about the only office which the Roman government made dependent on moral qualities. Only such men as had proven themselves of the strictest integrity, truthfulness, and honor, in addition to their military qualifications, could succeed to commissions as centurions; and these qualities conspicuously appear in all the military commanders of this rank of whom we read in the New Testament. And of this class was Cornelius. He was brought up in paganism—uncircumcised, and hence unclean to the people of Israel. The great noise which his conversion made among Christians arose from the fact that a Gentile was baptized and brought into the communion of believers without having submitted to the Jewish rites.

A double train of extraordinary circumstances conspired to bring about this marked instance of the first admission of Gentiles into the Christian Church: the one in the case of the man himself, and the other in the case of the chief of the apostles, whose mission it was to open the doors of the new kingdom both to Jews and Gentiles.

It was perhaps some six or eight years after the first Christian Pentecost when these things concerning Cornelius occurred. During that time, and maybe longer, he had lived in Palestine as a captain, with but little to occupy him. Upright, candid, and serious-minded, his contact with the Jewish religion induced inquiry for such truth as an honest man could reasonably rest on touching divine things. The many-godded paganism of his own nation gave him no such resting-place for his soul. He and his family gradually embraced the doctrine of one almighty God to whom alone divine honors are due, and came to recognize the God of the Jews as that God. The Messianic hopes also seemed to him to furnish the only satisfactory outcome for this present world. He had likewise become acquainted with the great Christian facts, and was deeply impressed by them. He knew about the history of Christ, and something of what had followed. Philip had preached in Cæsarea, and Peter's miracles in the neighboring region had awakened much attention. All this seriously affected Cornelius, and made him anxious to know the truth in which he might rest for salvation. As far as he had light, there was no sham about him. He had come to faith in Jehovah, and it was to him a living and practical faith, though he was rated as a heathen. "He was a devout man, and one that feared God." He prayed much, meditated, fasted, and gave alms after the Jewish fashion, but in a far more honest and devoted spirit. He was in true earnest to secure the divine favor and final blessedness, if at all attainable. And this honesty and earn-

estness God specially honored, and selected him as the first living accession to the Church from the Gentile world.

During one of his hours of devotion after a period of fasting, and while engaged with more intensity than ever in trying to draw near to God, he fell into an ecstatic condition, in which his spiritual nature seemed to break away from his body and come into fellowship with the invisible world. A vision appeared to him in which he saw an angel of God coming to him, who called him by name, told him of God's acceptance of his prayers and alms, and directed him to send to Joppa for one Peter, from whom he would learn what he so much desired to know. It was a true vision, specially vouchsafed to this good and honest Gentile to open the way for him into the faith and fellowship of the Christian Church. Nor did he fail to act on it as directed. No sooner had the angel disappeared than he called two of his household servants, and a devout soldier of them that waited on him continually, explained to them what had occurred, and sent them to Joppa for Peter.

But Peter would hardly have complied with the summons had there not been a corresponding dispensation to prepare him for the call by overcoming his Jewish prejudices. As God specially instructed Cornelius to send, so he also specially moved Peter to go. Being on a tour of visitation to the churches, he came to Joppa (the modern Jaffa), where he spent some days, having his lodgings in the house of one Simon the tanner. While tarrying there he also had

a vision. Coming in, wearied and hungry, he used the interval while his meal was making ready to go up to the retired flat top of the house to pray.

There is nothing like earnest prayer to bring the soul into familiar converse with Heaven. All the history of religion is witness to this. It was while the devout apostle was praying that he too was drawn quite out of his natural condition. The record says, "He fell into a trance, and saw heaven opened, and a certain vessel descending to him as it had been a great sheet, wherein were all manner of fourfooted beasts of the earth, and wild beasts, and creeping things, and fowls of the air," while a voice said "Rise, Peter; kill, and eat." To his Jewish education and prejudices this was a disgusting presentation. How could he eat what the law proscribed as common or unclean? But the voice again spoke and said, "What God hath cleansed, call not thou common." Three times was this repeated, and then the vessel with its contents was received up again into heaven.

The meaning and intent of this vision, though obvious enough now, were not at once understood by the apostle. He was much exercised as to what it might signify. It said very plainly that the Levitical distinctions between clean and unclean were now divinely abrogated. It showed that the clean and unclean both come from the same heavenly power, and that both are capable alike of being received up into heaven. As the apostle hungered for the ingathering of souls, here was an offer and a bidding for its gratification from among what the law pronounced

unclean as well as from among what it pronouced clean. The clear word was that as God sanctifieth the unclean by the operations of His Spirit, it is not the part of an apostle to call it unclean. The whole presentation exhibited the Christian Church extended to the four corners of the earth, gathering from all nations, and bearing both Jews and Gentiles alike to heavenly blessedness. But this was so far removed from all the thinking of the apostle that he did not at all take it in at first. Nevertheless he pondered it seriously, and was soon taught to understand its true meaning and application.

While Peter was musing on the vision, and before he could make out any satisfactory solution of it, the deputation from Cornelius reached the house and stood before the gate. The Spirit revealed to him the fact, and said unto him, "Behold, three men seek thee. Arise, therefore, and get thee down, and go with them, nothing doubting; for I have sent them."

I need not describe the interview between the apostle and these messengers. He went with them, reached Cæsarea, met Cornelius, and found a congregation of the captain's kinsmen and near friends eagerly awaiting his arrival. Peter beheld this earnest, solemn, and inquiring Gentile audience, and saw how anxiously and devoutly all were waiting to hear his words: the Joppa vision was solved, and at once assumed a very important and impressive meaning. Here were the unclean whom God was making clean. Referring to the unlawfulness for Jews to keep company with those of another nation, he now could say, "*But God hath showed me that I should not call*

any man common or unclean." He now read from the vision that the whole human race is one; that with its many diversities it is from the same divine source and capable of the same salvation; that the division made in it by the ceremonial law had none but an arbitrary foundation for a temporary purpose; and that it would be alien to the Gospel and the Spirit of God for him any longer to stand on these Levitical separations. And, having heard from Cornelius how he came to be sent for, all question on the subject vanished, and he opened his mouth and said, "*Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons; but in every nation he that feareth Him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with Him.*"

This is a very striking passage, and grandly sets forth the true catholicity of the Gospel as over against the national narrowness of Judaism. National distinctions enter not into the qualifications for admission into the kingdom of God. In Christ Jesus there is neither circumcision nor uncircumcision, Greek nor Jew, barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free. Descent from Abraham constitutes no better claim to the benefits of grace than descent from any other parentage. The only question concerning the admission of any one of any nationality is whether the person has become awake to devout fear of God, sincerely desires salvation, and is honestly made up, as a matter of supreme duty to God, to do all he knows and can learn of the divine will. Where such qualities appear, there are all the primary qualifications for Christian baptism and reception into

the fellowship of the Christian Church, no matter to what nation or people that person may belong.

But we must not mistake the real point of the apostle's statement. He does not mean to affirm that devout and honest heathen are in a condition of acceptance and salvation without regard to anything more. He does not mean to say that one religion is as good as another, only so that people are sincere. He does not mean that it is a matter of indifference what a man believes or professes, provided only he is honest and lives up to what light he has. To take the declaration in any such sense would be to pervert it to the support of very dangerous error. Peter is not speaking of being in a saved condition or of being in a state of absolute well-pleasing to God, but only of acceptance with Him in reference to eligibility for the reception of Gospel grace and admission to the Christian ordinances. The point is "the capacity of becoming Christian, not the capability of being saved without Christ. Otherwise, Cornelius might as well have remained a heathen, and need not have been baptized at all." There still was need for him to see and hear Peter, and to come to further light and duty, before he could come to Christian salvation. And if he was really a saved man, and fully accepted in heaven as a child of God, when Peter first came to him, how was it that the apostle at once proceeded to preach the Gospel to him as man's only hope, and to explain it as the testimony of all the holy prophets that only by faith in the once-crucified but since-risen and glorified Christ can any one attain to the remission

of sins? No, dear friends, honesty, sincerity, awe of the divine Majesty, and dutifulness to the best light one has while outside of the Church, though admirable qualifications for the reception of grace, are of themselves totally incompetent to any one's salvation. God has not bound Himself to His ordinances, but He has bound us to them; and the case of this earnest and devout man, while standing as a glorious monument of Gentile eligibility to the kingdom, at the same time bears with it the further record that the most sincere and devoted of the heathen still need to send for Christ's apostles, to receive their testimony concerning Jesus, and to accept baptism into His name before they can count on Gospel salvation.

A most blessed effect did the apostle's preaching have upon these eager and devoted Gentile auditors. Like the disciples on the way to Emmaus as Jesus opened to them the Scriptures, their hearts burned within them. Receiving the Word into good and honest hearts, a brilliant harvest of faith sprung up, and their whole being was kindled with joyous hope and enthusiasm. And, as on the day of Pentecost, "while Peter yet spake the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the Word," and all who accompanied Peter were filled with amazement that "on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost." Nay, the very wonder wrought upon the original disciples at Jerusalem appeared here also, "for they heard them speak with tongues and magnify God." It was the day of Pentecost extended to the Gentile world.

But there was one marked difference between this and all similar instances. Here the gift of the Spirit was received before baptism. It was only after they had received the Holy Ghost that Peter ordered them to be baptized, while in all other cases, as with the Samaritans, the gift of the Spirit came in connection with baptism or followed it in connection with the laying on of hands. This was an exception to the ordinary rule—not made by man, but by God Himself—but it was an exception for which there was the weightiest necessity. Had not the Holy Ghost thus come first, giving the very highest demonstration of the eligibility of the Gentiles to the full benefit of the kingdom of heaven, so deep and inveterate were the Jewish prejudices that most probably it would never have come to the giving of baptism to these foreigners. If Peter himself, by reason of his vision, had been disposed to receive them into the Church, the intimation is that those Jewish Christians who accompanied him would have protested, taken offence, and caused discord in the Christian ranks. But the outpouring of the Spirit in full measure in advance of the usual method of its conferment intervened to sweep away all possible question or hesitation. How could men refuse to baptize with the lower baptism of water those whom God had baptized with the higher baptism of the Holy Ghost? The exceptional placing of the gift was thus made the invincible argument against Jewish prejudice and narrowness, and was meant the more effectually to break down that "wall of partition" which had so long stood between the children of Israel and the common

world. This also was its direct effect upon the mind of Peter, who at once seized upon it and used it as an irresistible proof to his Jewish brethren, who could not deny that here was the same grace extended to the Gentiles which had been vouchsafed to the original Jewish disciples. In the face of such a demonstration from Heaven who was there to forbid water for the baptism of these people, the same as if they had been children of Abraham? Before such an argument Jewish exclusivism and national prejudice stood silenced and utterly confounded. There could be no answer to it—no avoiding of the conclusion which it embodied—no gainsaying of the truth that the redemption in Christ Jesus is the same for Gentiles as for those of Abraham's blood. Hence Peter commanded Cornelius and his friends "to be baptized in the name of the Lord," making a breach by which the Church of Christ escaped from the bondage of a cynical Judaism, and opening the gates by which we, with the great Gentile world, have found admittance into the privileges of the kingdom of grace.

So far, however, from settling the question once for all, it started the greatest and most troublesome controversy which agitated the apostolic churches. At Antioch, where the Gentile converts were at first the most numerous, it was the subject of much strife, in which Peter himself did not stand as firmly to his position at Cæsarea as could have been wished, and which was only finally settled by the first synod of the Christian Church when "the apostles and elders came together at Jerusalem for to consider of this

matter" (Acts 15). Nor was it until Paul, in his true evangelic catholicity, came upon the scene as the great apostle of the Gentiles, that the principles first put into effect by the special impulse and demonstrations of the Holy Ghost by Peter in the house of Cornelius came into full practical recognition in the Church, which now has universality for one of of its distinguishing notes and characteristics.

People might wonder why such eminent place is given in the Scriptures to the conversion of Saul of Tarsus. The answer may be found in part in the character of the man and in the wonderful circumstances under which it was wrought, but far more in the fact that with him and his apostleship began that mighty change which made the Church of Christ thenceforward coextensive with the world. Peter timidly made the breach in the walls of Jewish separatism, but it was Paul, under the guidance of the same Holy Ghost, who levelled them with the ground, and thus obliterated for ever the greatest barriers that ever divided man from man. Except for this, all subsequent generations would have had to enter Christianity through the gate of Judaism, and the peculiar usages of an Oriental nation would have hopelessly blended with the Christian ordinances, and oppressed the free, universal Church of Christ. But the plans and purposes of God were not thus to be narrowed and hampered; and Paul was made the apostle and champion to fight the battle through to victory, and to make it an unchangeable part of the Christian creed to confess one holy *catholic* Church, which knows no national boundaries, no Jew, no

Gentile, and which is the one universal brotherhood of believers redeemed to God by the blood of Jesus "out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation."

A great thing, therefore, was that which this day specially commemorates. It was the opening of the doors for the most valuable accessions to the Church in all the ages since. It was the divine demonstration which determined the decrees of the first Christian council, at which the apostle James presided, and which made it the law of Christianity not to burden converts with the Levitical observances, save that they should "abstain from meats offered to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication." It was the primal incision by which the immunities of God's holy covenant came to us as well as to the natural seed of Abraham. It was the gift of the Holy Spirit of promise—the Enlightener, Regenerator, Helper, and Comforter of souls—to the Gentile world, to which we owe all our hopes in Christ Jesus.

And who were the parties to whom these blessed experiences were imparted? The record tells us that they were honest and devout inquirers for the truth, anxious for the salvation of their souls, and ready to learn and do the will and good pleasure of almighty God; that they were eager listeners to the apostolic Word, preaching to them Jesus and remission of sins through faith in Him as our Lord and Saviour; that they humbly and devotedly submitted themselves to the ordinances of Christ, and were most happy to be numbered with the common fel-

lowship of Christian believers. And upon such it is that the Holy Ghost ever comes with His renewing and sanctifying power, to seal them as God's dear children unto eternal redemption. Every other way of dealing does but grieve and repel the Spirit of God and put barriers between the soul and salvation. If we would have the Spirit, and enter into the proper life and joy of Christianity, we must follow the same methods and exercise the same temper that we see exemplified in Cornelius. It may not secure for us the power to speak foreign languages, but it will make of us children of God, fill us with new life, touch our hearts with a heavenly fire, and open our lips to give testimony and praise to Him "who was delivered for our offences and raised again for our justification."

Let us, then, be careful to prize and improve the privileges of which we have, by divine grace, been made partakers. Let us not be high-minded, but fear; for if God spared not the natural branches which abused their calling, much rather will He not spare us. "Behold, therefore, the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in His goodness; otherwise thou shalt be cut off."

Trinity Sunday.

ROM. 11 : 33–36 : Oh the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or, who hath been his counsellor? or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again? For of him, and through him, and to him are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen.

A KING once asked a philosopher to tell him what God is. The man asked for time to consider before giving his reply. When the time expired he requested that it might be doubled; when the second period expired he came entreating that he might have as much more time as had already been granted; and when the last period expired he came beseeching that he might be excused altogether, saying that the more he thought on the question the more incompetent did he find himself to answer it. The truth is, that the subject is too vast for the human understanding. "It is as high as heaven; what canst thou do? deeper than hell; what canst thou know? The measure thereof is longer than the earth and broader than the sea." We behold a stream of mighty effects flowing over the earth and sky, but when we have traced it to its Source, and let down the fathom-line into the Fountain from which it issues, all the cordage we can

splice together does not serve to reach the bottom. We can understand some other things, but when it comes to this, all our powers are baffled and all aids and agencies fail to help us out.

And yet this is the subject which comes before us next after the outpouring of the Holy Ghost. The seasons and festivals of the Church Year have disclosed a marvellous, ever-widening, and ever-deepening river of grace and blessing. We have seen it come forth by the way of Bethlehem's manger, the gorge of Nazareth, the banks of Jordan, the wilderness of Judea, the cities of Galilee, the village of Bethany, the streets of Jerusalem, the heights of Calvary and Olivet, even to the surging billows that swelled out with heavenly coruscations on the day of Pentecost, thence to fill the world. By that river we have lingered, and gazed at the image of the heavens reflected on its bosom, and dipt up of its waters many a rich draught for our thirsty souls, and bathed in its current for the washing away of our sins. To-day, however, we are called to ascend to its Source; to leave Bethlehem and Nazareth and Jerusalem behind us; to soar beyond Golgotha, beyond Olivet, beyond the "exceeding high mountain" of the Transfiguration—higher than Moses on Sinai, higher than Elijah on Horeb, higher than the cloud which received the ascending Saviour out of His disciples' sight; up, up, where the world recedes into the nether distance, where the celestial wonders break on our vision, where the cataracts of eternity thunder, where the view opens out upon a sea of being without beginning and without end—there to

look into the abyss of living and eternal Godhead. But what mortal tongue shall tell the glory which here bursts upon us? How is the heart petrified, the thoughts confounded, the whole being amazed as we contemplate! What can we do? What can we say? What, indeed, but fall upon our faces, and take up the apostolic cry, "Oh the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!"

Let us then consider, as best we can,

I. Wherein these Depths of Godhead show Themselves to Us;

II. How we are to show Ourselves toward Them.

And may the Holy Ghost, who searcheth the deep things of God, assist and bless us in our contemplations!

I.

1. Beginning with the lowest first, we observe that the depths of Godhead show themselves in *the works of God.*

Beneath and around us stands the world which we inhabit, with its continents, its seas, its zones, and its icy poles. We know something of its configuration and its size. Men have sailed around it, penetrated far to the north and to the south, explored many of its lands, climbed many of its mountains, classified many of its productions, familiarized themselves with many of its constituents, its metals, its

various races of creature inhabitants. And yet how little do we really know about it! What limitations of our knowledge meet us at every point on every subject relating to the earth! Whether we take things large or small, things animate or inanimate, what grows out of the soil or lies in darkness under the surface, its liquids or its solids, everywhere we come upon mysteries and incomprehensibilities at which our knowledge fails and all our wisdom is at an end. What is the meaning and office of so many uninhabitable and even inaccessible regions? Who can tell us all that is in the sea or in the interior of the earth? Who can explain to us the winds—the saltness, tides and circulations of the ocean's waters —the principles of the magnet—the eccentricities of the seasons, or how a blade of grass grows? What man knows what man is—what his soul is—what his body is—what the relation between his soul and body is? Take the smallest particle of his physical organism, submit it to all the schools and universities in the world, let it be examined by the best science man can command, and what can they tell? They may speak of it as an atom, divisible, capable of motion, reflective of light, made up of certain chemical elements in certain relations and proportions; but every point in the description raises a hundred unsoluble questions, and all the philosophy and alchymy on earth cannot produce its like, even with all the materials furnished of which they say it is composed. Any earthly creature, any growing thing, any grain of dust, is enough to baffle all the wisdom of man. Even the most knowing, if honest

and truthful, are compelled to admit that the whole world and every object in it is a mystery—a mystery so profound that we can only wonder and exclaim, "Oh the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out!"

But all this world of ours is but a speck in the universe. Looking out from it, on every side a space presents of which no man knows the bounds, floating full of magnificent creations, in multitudes which no man can count, whose properties and histories no man can tell, and of whose products and populations no one knows anything. The farther we extend our gaze, stars and suns and revolving worlds throng on our sight, mocking all attempts to describe their spheres or to find limits to their number, whilst analogy and reason justly conclude that they are the homes of myriads of beings of whose natures, faculties, and employments we are in absolute ignorance. We are advised of organized hierarchies of mighty spirits,—thrones, principalities, lordly creations, and assemblages of intellectual existences, the offspring and subjects of the one infinite Creator, filling spheres and working out destinies of which we have only the faintest rudiments of the dimmest conception. We ask who and what they are, what the worlds in which they live, what the forms and conditions of their being, what the economies under which they act, what their relations, their occupations, their histories, and their futurities. We know who made them, whose laws they obey, and who holds their mighty dwelling-places in the

hollow of His hand. But as we look and think and gather all the knowledge within the reach of man we are left bewildered with amazement, and can only exclaim, "Oh the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out!"

2. Ascending next from things made to the Providence which presides over them—from the subjects to the government which rules them—we note the same depths of Godhead in *God's ways*. As there are natural modes of being and operation above and beyond the ken of man, so also are there prudential and moral administrations equally beyond our reach and penetration. God Himself tells us, "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts." Hence the question, "Who knoweth the mind of the Lord? or who hath been His counsellor?" There are some things revealed to us on which to lean and steady ourselves in forming a judgment of God and His ways, but beyond these we cannot venture without feeling the bottom give way beneath our feet and ourselves struggling with a mighty sea. Curiosity is eager to know, and presumption is prone to undertake, the answer why God made the world when and as He did—why He framed man so fallible and frail, so prone to sin, so liable to misery; why so many things adverse to him are allowed to happen; why His gifts are so unequally distributed; why fallen man is offered redemption, and fallen angels not; why the way to heaven lies through so many hardships and trials; why truth is

subjected to the necessity of such a hard and enduring battle with falsehood and error; why certain portions of the race are lifted so high in attainment and civilization, whilst others are left to grope for ages scarce a remove above the animals which surround them; and a thousand other questions of corresponding import on which many are prone to arraign the providence and administrations of Heaven.

Thus it was that the unbelieving Jews assailed and withstood the apostle. It enraged them to think that God could or would reject and condemn them for not receiving the apostolic doctrine of the Messiahship of Jesus. Having espoused and consecrated to Himself the Abrahamic race, and endowed them with such exalted privileges and pledges, and supported and cherished them with such parental care for ages, they thought Him a most inconsistent, unfaithful, and inconstant God to abandon and repudiate them now for not believing on the crucified Nazarene. To this the noble apostle makes answer, and by various arguments maintains the righteousness and honor of the sovereign Disposer of all things. But, having steered his discourse satisfactorily amid the rocks of human cavil, he yet casts anchor in the great truth that God is too unsearchable to be thus judged by man; that His ways are a great deep; that we can only look and wonder and adore when it comes to the weighing of His doings. Though irreconcilable to the ideas of a Jew, the thing was nevertheless true.

And so in our own times, in our own lives, and in nearly every day's experiences, we come upon mys-

teries of Providence which admit of no solution, except that so it has seemed good to the great Father in heaven. In the case of the world at large, in the histories of peoples, in the lives of individuals, and in each alike, again and again we find all human wisdom and explanation overmatched. Events are continually turning out contrary to all man's ideas and against all our prayers and expectations, the best sometimes the worst, and the most indifferent and deprecated frequently the best. We may lay our plans with the utmost care and wisdom, and think we may count with confidence on the result, but a little accident or a mere trifle turns the whole course of things and brings all to naught. In losses and in gains, in failures and in successes, in sorrows and in joys, in crosses and in triumphs, we are continually coming upon surprises, incomprehensibilities, and mysterious turns which baffle all explanation, and so astound, amaze, and disappoint us that we can only open our eyes and exclaim, "Oh the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out!"

3. And still much more do the depths of Godhead show themselves when we come to consider *the divine nature*. Far easier is it to look into the noonday sun with open eyes and steady gaze, or to grasp the heavens into our two arms, than for mortal man to compass and comprehend the essential being of the Father Almighty. Staggered and confounded at the contemplation of His works and ways, how much more are we at a loss when we come to meditate

upon His awful and eternal Self! We talk of His attributes and perfections, and are overwhelmed and lost in the wildernesses of glory therein laid open to us; and yet these are only the approaches which lead to Him, the reflected rays of His outshining Deity. What must He, then, be in Himself! How is the soul dismayed at the task of measuring the length and breadth and depth of such an ocean!

An infamous man by the name of Vanini, at the beginning of the sixteenth century, conceived the idea and undertook the scheme of erasing from the earth all belief in a God. He associated with himself a college of eleven atheists, pledged as his emissaries and apostles to go into all the world on this mission of extermination to the idea and worship of an infinite Creator. The commission he gave them was to go and preach, with ridicule and mockery, that "God is a being who exists through infinite ages, and yet is not capable of past or to come; fills all, without being in any place; is fixed, without situation; pervades all, without motion; is good, without quality; great, without quantity; universal, without parts; moves all things, without being moved Himself; His will constituting His power, and His power being confounded with His will; Himself outside of all, within all, beyond all, before all, and after all." Not inaptly did he thus describe Jehovah; but every item in the portraiture is so confounding to all human understanding that he thought the mere statement of it would be enough to destroy all faith in it. Demented man! Call sound reason or sacred Scripture to the stand, and both depose

alike that *there must be a God*, and that if He is at all, every one of these particulars must be true. But when reason tries to realize to itself what its own better conclusions involve, it can only lift up its hands and cry, "Oh the depths! the depths!"

And when we approach the sure and certain revelation of His eternal *Three-one-ness*, the mystery heightens, like Andes piled on Himalayas. The great St. Augustine was once in much perturbation of mind, trying to comprehend and define the Christian doctrine on this subject. Whilst thus exercised, he tells us that he dreamed he was on the shore of the sea, where a child had dug a hole in the sand, and with a shell was dipping up sea-water and pouring it into the hole. He asked the child what it was doing. "Oh," said the little one, "I am just emptying the sea into this hole." He laughed and said, "Mistaken child! you never can do that." "Indeed!" answered the child; "and thou wouldst empty the mysteries of the infinite God with the little dipper of thy thoughts!" It was a dream, but it rightly told the story. We may search and reason, and stretch all our powers to the utmost, but, after all, we are obliged to halt and exclaim, "Oh the depths! the depths!" With all our dipping, a fathomless and boundless sea remains.

Thus, do the depths of Godhead show themselves to us.

Consider now,

II. How we are to show Ourselves toward Them.

1. Such profound mysteries call for profound reverence. A dreadfully-perverted use would we make of them to take them as the basis of a general religious skepticism. Because Jehovah is a God who hideth Himself, we are not therefore to conclude that His existence is a myth or an impossibility. Though clouds and darkness are round about Him, there still is enough light and evidence that "He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him." Let it be for the demented Vaninis to find in the sublimities of His perfections a reason for denying His eternal being and Godhead. He who rejects a truth because he cannot explain it, or refuses to receive it until he can fully comprehend it, does but act the fool, and can neither live, nor know that he lives, if he follows out his doctrine in full practical consistency. If a man cannot accept mysteries, he cannot accept anything, for everything is full of mystery. Life is a mystery; his own being is a mystery; the world is a mystery; the food he eats, the water he drinks, the air he breathes, the sleep by which he refreshes himself, the friend he loves, the death he must inevitably die, the very thought by which he sets himself against a better logic,—each is a mystery which he can neither account for, explain, nor comprehend. To be consistent, he must become a universal skeptic: he can know nothing, he can believe nothing; he must let go all truth; he must separate himself from everything that is; he must go into absolute isolation; he must suppress and evacuate his own existence; he must sink for ever in a universal sea of unknowable-

ness, with nothing to take hold of, nothing to rest on, himself the absurdest mystery of all. Oh the perverseness of the human heart! the foolishness of human wisdom! Because men cannot fathom the abysses of Deity nor compass His nature and perfections with their little thoughts, they conclude that His existence is an impossibility, and by denying *Him* deny the possibility of anything. God is God for the very reason that He transcends all our thoughts. A God in no way beyond our comprehension, a God that can be embraced in man's shrunken head, would be a God no greater than ourselves, and could not be a God at all. He who can grasp perfection is himself perfection's equal. Think, O vain man, and see and know that there are many mightier and sublimer things than were ever dreamt of in thy philosophy. As thou canst not deny the stars nor grasp them with thy hands, but standest amazed and confounded at the contemplation of their glory, and as thou canst not fight away the world because thou knowest not its source and wast not there when it was made, so thou art the veriest fool to think there can be nothing greater, higher, and better than is within the reach of thy poor reason, which yesterday was not, and to-morrow may be extinguished by the slightest accident.

St. Paul was one of the master-minds of the ages. He knew more of the depths and mysteries of Godhead than a regiment of the proud savants and skeptical pedants of our day. But, so far from being staggered at the vast wonders or led to deny and ridicule his Maker's existence, it turned the sublime

teacher into a humble pupil, his doctrines into adoration, and his observations into devoutest songs of praise. And the same should be the effect on every right man.

2. Well also are these depths of Godhead fitted to humble our pride. Our Maker has given us a wonderful power of understanding, but what false self-consequence and conceit does it often beget! How prone are we to undertake to hector Deity, to sit in judgment on His ways, to question His administrations, and to put in our silly caveats concerning His decrees and government! Everywhere men interject their whys and wherefores, their dictations and their objections. To hear some people talk, one would suppose them almighty kings of mind, and the eternal One their blundering menial and subject. Oh the impious presumption which lives and works in poor blind humanity, that it should think to teach the Deity how and what His administrations ought to be! Shall clay in the potter's hand call him to account for having made it as he pleased? How long were the Almighty's plans complete before thy stammering tongue could speak or ever thou wast born? Shall the insect of an hour sit as judge upon the Ancient of Days? Wilt thou demand of Him who was good enough to give thee thy life and breath and all thou hast? Down with thy pride, O man, before a Majesty so tremendous and a Being so august. Put thy hand upon thy mouth, and thy mouth in the dust, and cry the confession of thy nothingness! What art thou to Him of whom and through whom and to whom are all things? How

many thousand times has His eternal wisdom put to shame all thy complainings! How infinitely better have been His ways than what thou thoughtest to prescribe to Him! Lo, thou art but of yesterday, and hast not yet learned to know thyself; and how wilt thou show wisdom unto Him toward whom thy highest thoughts reach not halfway? Therefore, get thee down in the ashes, where thy place is, thou worm of the earth. Realize thy insignificance. Cover thyself with dust for thy presumption, and hide away in shame for thy littleness and folly.

3. But whilst these depths of Godhead humble our conceit and pride, how do they encourage to joyous and childlike faith! God is great and wise beyond all our searching, therefore may we rest assured that all is well in His hands and management.

A country farmer once remarked to Luther that he could not understand the Creed where it speaks of God Almighty. "Neither can I nor all the doctors," said the great Reformer; "but only believe it in all simplicity, and take that God Almighty for thy Lord, and He will take care of thee and all thou hast, and bring thee safely through all thy troubles." Yea, if God were not great beyond all our thoughts, how could we confide in Him or trust ourselves and all things into His holy keeping? He is a sea unfathomable; yes, but not a sea to overwhelm us. He is a sea, but a sea of love and goodness, from which we may for ever draw grace for grace. He is an abyss unsearchable; yes, but not an abyss of darkness in which to plunge and be dashed to atoms. He is an abyss, but an abyss of mercy, whence to

bring up treasures of riches and blessing beyond compute. He is more than our understandings can take in, and dwells in light to which no man can approach; but, praise be to His name! the hem of His garment the hands of faith can grasp, and be sure that such a God will bring us safe through every darkness and perplexity. We cannot penetrate His counsels nor fathom His decrees, but we can be confident that One so wise and mighty knows how to arrange them and to carry them out to a glorious consummation. What He doeth now we know not, but our consolation is that *He knows*, and that nothing can thwart the beneficent purposes of a Being so sublime. With such a steersman at the helm we may count the voyage safe, and that with all the rocks and whirlpools in the way we shall not fail to reach the blessed shores. And though He may often bring all our plans to naught, and lead us by ways we know not, His infinite perfection is pledge enough that no disaster can befall those whom He has engaged to keep and save.

4. And how do these depths of Godhead incite and inflame to homage and worship! Among all that are called gods, there is no god like our God, even our enemies themselves being judges. We think upon His perfections, and we are quickly bewildered amid the sublimities that blaze upon us. We think upon His works and ways, and are overwhelmed with the amplitude and unsearchableness of His power, His intelligence, and His sovereign administrations. Begin where we may, move in any direction we like, everything brings us face to face

with an eternal power and presence, with depths and mysteries of glory upon glory, which say to us, as the voice from the burning bush said to Moses, "Put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground."

When the great intellect of Paul contemplated the wonders of divine Almightiness with bent knees and a heart almost breaking with reverential emotion, he exclaimed, "Oh the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out!" And why should it not be so with every one of us?

When the thunderstorm is upon us, and the black sky blazes and rends with flashing bolts, and the heavens themselves seem as if they had collapsed and were being precipitated upon the affrighted and trembling earth, how are our souls awed before the convulsions and terrors that are about us! When embarked upon a sea tossed with mighty winds, the waves of which roll like mountains, and whose dreadful jaws gape on all sides to swallow us up, what heart so callous or so dead as not to feel the presence of a majesty before which it can scarcely contain itself? Yet what trifles are these compared with the almightiness of God! And shall we not stand in awe of such a power? Shall we not tremblingly adore a Being whose word called forth the worlds from naught, and whose simple frown can unmake them all? Is God so great and high and mighty beyond all thought, and we not fear Him nor revere His awful Name? Can it be that we should

know of such an existence and not fall down and worship Him?

5. And what an outlook into eternity do these depths of Godhead open to the confiding believer! They show how very limited and imperfect our knowledge in this world is, and how well we may be ashamed at the little we really know. But it is the nature of man to wish to know more, to understand better, to have a clearer look into things so deep and mysterious. Nor is there a greater blessedness and glory for man than to learn and understand. And the unknown now marks the range of our growth in the great future. What we know not now we shall know hereafter. These amazing depths at which we so devoutly wonder here do but indicate the paths and fields of an everlasting expansion in light and intelligence. They show us how, when these bonds and barriers of flesh and blood are gone, we shall for ever swim and soar amid the infinitudes of Jehovah's glory, where every aspiration shall be satisfied and every capacity be for ever full. We shall not always live in shades and darkness. The veil between the porch and the Holy Place will not always hang there unrent. Our way shall not be perpetually beset and interrupted with chasms and gulfs. Presently this night will be at an end. Presently we shall find ourselves where sun and moon are no more needed. Presently we shall have entered where we shall know even as we are known, and that which is in part shall be done away. Presently we shall be able to compass these depths and mysteries. Presently shall all these tangles be unravelled

and these obstructions give way for ever. And how will these souls rejoice themselves in that vast sea of light! How will they thrill with the illuminations of that wisdom and knowledge now so unfathomable!

O prostrate soul, quit thy dust and anticipate thy felicity! Let thy zeal run with that of Moses when he prayed, "Lord, show me Thy glory!" Look beyond the clouds and darkness that now shroud His throne to that immortal sunshine which is soon to dawn. And if thou needs must die before that day of glory comes, compose thyself to it and depart in peace, for beyond is the realm of everlasting light.

Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty!
All Thy works shall praise Thy Name in earth, and sky, and sea;
Holy, holy, holy! Merciful and Mighty!
God in Three Persons, blessed Trinity!

First Sunday after Trinity.

1 JOHN 4: 16–21: And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love: and he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him.

Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as he is, so are we in this world.

There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth, is not made perfect in love.

We love him, because he first loved us.

If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar. For he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God, whom he hath not seen? And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God, love his brother also.

HE apostle John, by common consent, is pre-eminently the apostle of love. Though by natural constitution a very "son of thunder," such was the influence of grace upon him that he became one of the most gentle and maiden-like of men. While Jesus lived he was distinguished as "that disciple whom Jesus loved;" and when about a hundred years old, and so feeble that he could not walk any more to the place of worship, he had himself carried thither, and when he could say no more he would still speak to the congregation, Sunday after Sunday, and say, "*Little children, love one another.*" And that same apostle of the Lord, full of the Spirit of God, is borne into

our assembly to-day, and here speaks to us, and repeats in our ears his sacred discourses of love.

The love of God, in which our Christian faith rejoices; how He loved us before there was any love in us toward Him; how true religion is built upon God's love; and how the whole life of faith is simply an appreciative response on our part to that merciful goodness which ever pours upon us from the gracious Father in heaven,—are the themes which he discusses until he sees the whole depth of the divine nature resolved into love. To him God not only *has* love, as He has wisdom, power, and other attributes, but He *is* love itself.

Nor was the holy apostle mistaken in this. Everything is full of attestations to its truth. All nature around us is but the outflow of an all-wise and almighty beneficence. The blue summer skies, the earth arrayed in green and flowers, the birds chirping and singing on every side, the evening zephyrs, the morning dew-pearls, the leaves bending to the blessed showers, the roses nodding from their thorny stems, and every blade and branch and waving ear in forest or in field, combine to form and give forth the blessed proclamation that *God is love.* And when we come to the house of His Word and worship, pulpit with its glad tidings and solemn monitions, altar with its cross, lectern with its lessons, font with its blessed pledges, and the Spirit that hovers over the place and breathes upon the worshippers, unite in giving testimony to the great truth that *God is love.* What else can we ourselves affirm when we consider the endowments He has

given us, the spheres to which He has called us, and the unfailing readiness with which His ears listen to our prayers? And when we contemplate the stupendous scheme He has instituted for the recovery and salvation of a lost world, what else could its Author be but a deep and unfathomable spring of love? What else could have brought the Son of God into our world, or induced the laying down of His life for us, but a most profound and unmerited goodness and love? How could the blessed Jesus have borne Himself in our world as He did, showing a divine compassion in every act and feature and breath and word and miracle—smiling peace and gladness into the widow's cottage, the chambers of affliction, the homes of woe, and even the graves of the dead, and while giving up His life upon the cross with latest breath imploring mercy upon His very murderers—except as the embodiment of an ocean of love?

And even in those dark and most adverse providences in which we are readiest to complain and find fault, there reigns a merciful goodness which often turns our greatest afflictions and disappointments into the greatest mercies. A storm capsized a vessel at sea, enclosing in it the captain and mate. The air inside, which kept the hulk from sinking, soon became so foul and compressed that it was hardly possible to live in it. So the mate set to work with his knife to cut an opening to get a little fresh air, not thinking that such an opening would sink the vessel. He worked and cut until he could begin to see the light through the thin board yet remaining between

him and the outer air. His heart was full of joy as he set to with new energy to cut clean through. But just then his knife broke, and he was compelled to give up all hope and sat down in despair to die. On the morrow he and his companion were rescued. He mourned the broken knife and gave up all for lost when it gave way, and yet it was that breakage that saved his life. And so the most disheartening afflictions often prove the most precious of benedictions even before our eyes, showing how infinitely better God is than all our wisdom and all our thoughts.

The goodness and love of God also determine the nature of true piety in man. God is love, and there can therefore be nothing Godlike or Godward without love. Hence all human duty is summed up in the one precept of love. If we have no liking for God, no affection for so good and gracious a Father, no pleasure and delight in Him, no grateful appreciation of His gracious mind, no reflection of His loveliness in our own feelings and aims, then are we aliens and enemies, and not His children. Disliking Him and His will and law, we negative His deepest perfections. Putting ourselves forth in any other way than that of charity and good-will, we belie Him in claiming that He is our Father. God is love, and we cannot dwell in God without dwelling in love. God is love, and we cannot be the children of God if we have not the spirit of love.

The apostle therefore stated a great practical fact when, in the name of all Christians, he said, "*We love Him.*" Apprehending God as a God of love, it

is one of the deepest principles of all their faith and devotion that they love Him. Knowing and believing the love He has to them, their hearts are drawn to Him in turn, and they are informed with His own image. His love begets their love, and warms and animates their whole nature with the spirit of love.

But love is not a thing to be forced. It is not created by our will. When it comes, it comes like breathing. Law and command cannot beget it. It can only be kindled by that which is lovely and by the presentation of that which is loving and good. It is not the will of the infant that makes it love its mother, but that mother's love to it. And so God presents His love and goodness to us, and shows how he is concerned for our happiness and peace, that we may learn to trust Him and rest our affections on Him. And only when we thus learn how good and gracious God is, and become familiarly attached to Him as the source of all our blessedness, and repose in Him as the great object of our supreme regard, are we really His children.

The reason why men love him not is because they have not learned to know Him, and do not believe that He is love, and have no right sense of how He loves them. Did they understand and feel what a loving Father He is, and what an undying affection He ever bears toward them, they would love Him, and find their supreme pleasure in honoring Him and being like Him. And where this affection is once begotten and cherished, and the heart has learned to confide in His love and goodness, and the

soul looks up to Him as its ever-present hope, help, and delight, there is the spirit of childship, and the true power and comfort of Christianity.

If God had not first loved us, it would not be possible for us thus to love Him. But He has loved us. Before we were at all, His love moved toward us and fashioned us into joyous being. When we had fallen He loved us still, and moved with a still more wonderful affection to redeem us. While we were yet sinners and enemies He sent His Son to become a propitiation for us. A wonderful economy of redeeming love He has also constituted, which surrounds us on all sides every day, just that we may learn to know how truly good He is, and be won to love Him in return.

People sometimes think it a hard thing when we call upon them to let go their earthly loves and likes and set their affections on things above. But it is only asking them to open their eyes to behold God's infinite beauty and loveliness. They are afraid of Him. They tremble when they think of His almightiness, and are troubled when they take Him into their thoughts. Like sinning Adam, they would get away and hide from His presence. They do not know what a loving Father He is. They do not once realize how much He loves them and how anxious He is to help, comfort, and save them. Did they only believe that He is love, and that there is nothing truer than the affection which He has for them, they would not thus dislike to think of Him nor thus wish to be separated from Him. And the whole life of faith is simply a seeing, knowing, and

grateful responding to the love which the Father hath toward us.

Nor is it a hardship to love and admire what is lovely, or to be affectionately grateful when we are the recipients of blessed benefactions. We love our friends because they have proved themselves worthy of our regard. We take up for them by natural impulse. It is no hard thing to feel for them. We delight in pleasing them. We would feel mean and self-condemned if we did not tenderly regard them and requite their love and friendship with like love and friendship. And no harder is it for us to love that dearest and best of all friends who has first loved us. Indeed, we stultify ourselves, stifle every right principle, dishonor and disown everything good and noble in a moral creature, not to acknowledge and reciprocate an affection so great as that wherewith God has loved us.

And a very blessed thing it is for us to know and believe the love that God hath to us. A child may be frightened and distressed beyond the power of any stranger to compose and soothe it, but the moment it finds itself in its mother's arms it is hushed to peace. Thus do all fears depart as we learn to feel and know how good and gracious God is, and the soul, else so full of dread, becomes quiet through its confidence in His almighty love.

We are often alarmed and troubled when we think of our sins, the judgment to come, the mysteries of the world beyond us. We cannot dwell on these things without some anxiety as to how it will be with us in the great beyond. But here is our con-

solation: *God is love*, and hath loved us and provided a ransom for us, and for Christ's sake proposes to take us into His loving favor and bring us safely to eternal rest. All He asks of us is to open our eyes and hearts to see and know and believe it. Wide open are His arms to receive us, and to comfort us against all our sins, and to give us boldness against all dread of danger in the day of judgment. Knowing and believing the love that He hath to us, our souls are in perfect peace.

The reign of love is the reign of blessedness. Before sin touched our race, when man confided in the goodness of his loving Creator, the earth was Paradise. What made it something else was the fading away of that reign of love. All that bars us out of it now is simply this want of confiding love. With that restored, we again have Paradise restored. Love in the heart makes it a Paradise, and wherever love reigns lost Eden blooms again. The absence of blessedness in hell is simply the absence of love. To love truly, being loved, is heaven already begun —eternal life already pulsating in our souls. We may have outward trials, and ups and downs may still attend our pathway through the world; but, nestled in God by the power of a loving and confiding affection, there is nothing that can disturb our composure or destroy our peace. Death may come, but death and the grave are effectually disarmed and abolished to those in fellowship with the eternal Source of life and blessing. The judgment may come, but it can bring no condemnation and no discomfiture to those in Christ Jesus. It is already as

good as past to them that are at one with God and rooted and grounded in His saving love. With Him as our Friend and Protector, what can harm us? Nor do we need anything more than to know and believe the love that He hath to us in order to triumph over all adversities and fears.

Ah, yes; it is a beautiful and blessed thing to know and believe the love that God hath to us. Out of what anxieties and miseries it lifts the soul! To what comforting assurances it makes us heirs! What fond anticipations it kindles in the heart, never to be disappointed! And why should we not all know and believe it? What is to hinder or prevent? *God is love.* He is the portion of all those who are willing to have Him as such. His love is a working, efficient, and saving love to all who confide themselves into His care. And why should any fail of the beauty and blessedness of dwelling in Him?

Oh these hard, rebellious, and unbelieving hearts! Why should they doubt the heavenly Father's love? Why should they hold back from confidence in Him who is nothing but love? Why should affection rove amid a thousand objects which cannot avail, when such a Spring of all-satisfying Goodness is within such easy reach? How callous and unfeeling is man, that he makes no better response to the amazing love of his Maker! How blind and dead these souls of ours, that they do not better perceive and know and believe the love that flows so freely for the cure of all our misgivings and all our fears!

Ho, ye downcast and trembling ones! why carry any farther the burden of your miseries? Cast on

God your care, for He careth for you. Hope in Him, for He is your salvation and your God. Doubt Him not, for He loved you from the first, and loves you still with a love that cannot fail. See and know and believe that in Him standeth your salvation, and take heart and hope and peace in His great Father-heart.

If in this vale of tears
Rugged the path appears,
Yield not to faithless fears;
In Him confide.
Press with stout heart along,
Cheering your way with song;
He cannot do you wrong
Who is your guide.

Second Sunday after Trinity.

1 JOHN 3: 13–18: Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you.

We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother, abideth in death.

Whosoever hateth his brother, is a murderer; and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him.

Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.

But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him? My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue, but in deed and in truth.

DEATH and life are very expressive terms. They are here used in a peculiar sense to describe spiritual conditions. The human family consists of but two grand classes, and the condition of the one class is that of death unto death, and that of the other of life unto life. The difference between these two classes involves a wholly different standing in the universe and a wholly different destiny. Outwardly, the difference does not seem so wide; nor is it so wide that the one class may not become part and parcel with the other. The dead may pass from death unto life, and those alive may sink back into the death from which they have emerged. Yet the difference between the spiritual estate of the two is the same as between death

and life; and the passage from the one to the other takes in everything of a genuine Christian experience.

The apostle says that he and his brethren knew that they had made the transition from death unto life, and proceeds to indicate wherein the proof of it appeared. He thus introduces a test by which all his readers could know whether they had come to proper life or not. The whole presentation is one of great seriousness, and should not be lightly passed over. If we are among the dead, we ought to know it, that we may come to a better state; and if we have passed from death unto life, we must be able to show the proofs of it as here set forth.

Let us, then, consider briefly,

I. The Nature of these Two Opposite States;
II. The Evidence of having Passed from One to the Other.

I.

Death and *life* in this connection are not literal death and life, but death and life with regard to a particular sphere of sensibility, affection, and activity. Yet they describe serious realities. There is on the one side such an entire absence of proper life, and on the other such a real living in that wherein there was previously nothing but deadness, that we can hardly regard the words as purely figurative. The death is a real deadness and the life is a real living, though the death and life are not synonymous with corporeal death and life. Bodily life is presupposed

in both cases, and it is only spiritual death and life that the apostle has in mind. The question is as to deadness or life to God and the things of God—the absence or presence of moral quickening and spiritual renewal—death or life in the apprehension, appreciation, and active pursuit of what relates to the fellowship of the soul with God and its eternal blessedness.

The death of which the apostle speaks is a real mutilation of one's spiritual being, so that the life lived is a crippled, maimed, and disabled life, in which the noblest part of the nature and the truest activities of the soul are wholly suppressed, suffocated, and dead. Certainly, there is no complete life in one who lives no more than for his body and the perishable gains and pleasures of this world. Certainly, there is no fulfilment of the ends for which the breath of life has been breathed into a man where life is wholly given to the denial, disregard, and resistance of the Creator's will. How can he be rightly *alive* whose anxious thoughts, aims, and aspirations extend no farther than what pertains to these few earthly years of grovelling existence? How can he be said to have come to proper life who spends his immortal powers in the service of lust, selfishness, and vanity—a reckless squanderer of the noblest treasures of his being—a mere child of Belial? How can he be said to live in the better elements of life whose soul is without reverence, whose heart is without love, whose sentiments never rise above the paltry pleasures and possessions of time and sense, whose conversation is without God, and whose stifled

nature never knew the thrill and glow of immortal hopes? How can he be said to live to whom the kingdom of heaven has been opened, but who yet spurns it from his regard, preferring to live in rebellion against gracious Omnipotence and to pursue the vile pleasures of filth and sin to the securement of crowns and princedoms in supernal realms? How, indeed, can he be said to live the life for which his high manhood was bestowed who knows and follows no principle of life but to pamper his greed, selfishness, and passions, creeping through the world like an unclean creature of darkness, hating, envying, oppressing, and trailing his whole career with slime and beastliness, which render it a relief when he finds his grave? Nay, how can any one be said to live in anything that makes life worth living who lives only at strife with his Maker, ever consuming the bounties of Heaven only to render despite to the glorious Giver? It cannot be. Such people are *dead* in all that enters into proper life. Whatever be their intellect, energy, force, or power, so long as they are oblivious, blank, motionless, and unfeeling toward things divine and eternal they have no right life in them. They are *dead* even while they live—"dead in trespasses and in sins," and on the way to everlasting death.

And this, alas! is the real condition of the vast majority of earth's population. It is the condition to which we are all born. At least we come into the world with such a proneness upon our nature that, if left to ourselves, we inevitably drift into this condition. All humanity, naturally engendered, is

tainted and corrupt; and that taint is sure to breed the very death of which we are speaking unless counteracted by the regenerating grace of God. A common depravity is upon every one of us, ever tending to eternal death, so that no one is really alive in the sense of the text who has not been the subject of a new genesis through the quickening and renewing power of the Holy Ghost.

But not all are thus dead. There has been a great and wonderful movement of heavenly goodness, instituted and put into full operation through the incarnation and mediation of the Son of God, to give life to the souls of men by spiritual regeneration. That movement is not without effect. Ever since the Gospel began to be proclaimed it has found some willing listeners and earnest believers, who, though once dead, were quickened by the word of Jesus and made alive to God and heaven. The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus set them free from the law of sin and death, awakened in them new affections, opened their eyes to things unseen, and animated them with hopes and aspirations which lay hold on the true goal of life. Once lost prodigals, far wandering from God, they were found; once dead to all heavenly affections, they became alive again. Putting off the old man with his lusts, they put on the new man, which is renewed in the image of Him that created him. Having embraced Christ by faith as their divine Lord and Saviour, He was in them the hope of glory, and making all their being alive with supreme interest in the things which are above.

And of all the children of men, these alone are

the people who truly *live*, having "passed from death unto life." They live to the law, whose condemnation has been cancelled and taken away by their Redeemer's blood. They live in the element of faith and hope toward God as their reconciled Father, to whose will and service they are consecrated. They live in the sweet enjoyment of His favor, and are so conformed in all their affections and activities to the teachings and example of Jesus that it is not so much they that live as Christ that liveth in them. By the Gospel of the grace of God they have drunk in something of angelic life—a life to goodness, purity, and love; a life which has in it the quality of eternal perpetuity; a life which the death of the body cannot destroy; a life which the pale cheek, the fading eye, the wasting frame, and the departing breath only develop into more ethereal beauty preparatory to being clothed upon with a heavenly house of everlasting glory. Jesus says, "I give unto them eternal life," "and I will raise them up at the last day." Yea, such is the economy of things under which we now live that "he that hath the Son hath life, and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life" (1 John 5 : 12).

Mysterious but simple is this regenerating and reviving process. A heavenly Word has come forth in the Gospel. That Word is informed with a divine energy to penetrate the soul and stir it into sensibility and action. By this Word, written and preached, along with ordinances, providences, and approaches from without and from within, God is ever moving through this valley of dry bones, arousing and quick-

ening the dead, and ever more and more building them up in spiritual resurrection. Very few now fail of some consciousness of a hidden presence urging and prompting them to a new and better state of being. And whosoever receives, believes, and obeys the Word, and answers to the accompanying Spirit's impulses, awakes from sleep, arises from the dead, and thus passes from death unto life.

Just when and where the first impressions are made, or how we become alive to the sphere of faith, very few can ever tell. It is often a very gradual process, beginning far back in the early dawn of life, and progressing through many stages and steps of which the soul has no distinct record. Natural life and spiritual life have many points of analogy, and the latter, much like the former, comes in a course of things of which we have no personal consciousness. In both instances it often takes a long time till we come to know that we are alive. But a potent economy of grace is in full force about us. Sooner or later we hear a call and feel a sacred prompting. Yielding to it, we begin to stir in things to which we previously were dead. We awake and begin to think and act. And presently there comes a time when we no longer are what we once were, and find ourselves alive and active in a sphere which previously was a mere blank. Like the coming to themselves of men temporarily demented or of persons who have fainted dead away, so we by the operations of grace recover consciousness and the right possession of our faculties. We begin to exercise and direct ourselves according to a new understanding, and be

come alive to God and heaven. And this it is that the apostle here calls passing from death unto life.

Notice, now,

II. The Evidence of having Made this Transition.

If we would count ourselves Christians, it is important that we should know and be sure that we are what we think we are. The apostle claims that if we have passed from death unto life we may and should know it, and clearly states what is to determine the question for us.

So great a change as that from death to life we would think no one could mistake. But it is a spiritual transition which is not so readily perceived as we might suppose. It requires careful discrimination to know whether it has really occurred or not. It is not a matter that evidences itself by sensations, frames, ecstasies, and visions. We cannot know that the heart is thoroughly changed as we would know whether we have become rid of a pain. And though it would seem to be easy enough to tell whether we are awake, alive, feeling active and warm in those things which belong to a life of faith and godliness, it is not so easy to find a sure and reliable test in the case. Many think they are alive while really they are dead. Hence the inspired apostle here gives us a criterion by which to judge whether we have come to genuine spiritual life or not. He tells us that if we "love the brethren" we have passed from death unto life, but that if any one "loveth not his brother, he abideth in death."

This would seem to be a strange sort of test for the determination of so great a matter. But the apostle does not mean it as the only thing entering into the case. Elements of doctrine and life also come into the account. These, however, are presupposed. The address is to Christians, and all else relating to the Christian profession is taken for granted, It is only after all else is right that this further and ultimate test applies. Otherwise there can be no question that the state of death still holds. Nor is it ever to be forgotten that the whole nature and spirit of practical Christianity runs in the line of love. The fundamental essence of all true religion is to love God supremely, and our neighbor as ourselves. And if our religion has failed to beget in us such love to God and our fellow-men, especially love for our brethren in the faith, it is evident that the work of grace has not yet had full effect; for he that loveth not his brother, or is in a state of enmity, abideth in death.

Here, then, is a ready and outstanding test by which every professed Christian can readily see whether the true life of religion has really penetrated and renewed his or her heart. Every one knows whether he is living and acting in enmity, spite, or hatred toward the Church or toward any fellow-member of it. And if any one, from any cause, is nursing and cherishing a temper and spirit of this kind toward any fellow-Christian, the conclusion must be—for such is God's Word on the subject—that that person has not yet been effectually brought out from under the dominion of the old Adam to

true regenerated life under Christ, but still abides in death. To be at bitter and spiteful outs with any one who stands to us in the relation of a spiritual brother or sister is a censure of God for taking such into His favor, and shows a heart radically unreconciled to Him. Whatever else there may be, so long as such an ill temper is kept up and cherished, so long does that person continue in condemnation and death. Wince and plead and squirm as we please, the conclusion is the same, for it is the truth of God.

It was the characteristic of the common world in the apostle's times to dislike, speak against, hate, and persecute the people of the Church. Jews and Gentiles mocked and denounced them, and enacted all manner of malignant spite against them. The reigning powers everywhere rose up against Christians, and came forth with chain and sword and lighted torch to do them all the harm that man could do. And for a Christian to hate his brother, to wish him ill, to rejoice in his misfortunes, to cast him out of regard and sympathy, to vent spite upon his name, to act toward him with a spirit of contempt and detestation, is to show the very spirit of the persecuting world, and to prove one's self in heart to be of that world, and not of the brotherhood of faith. Nay, to hate any child of God is to hate God Himself, to take sides against Christ as He dwells in His people, and so to give proof positive that we have not yet come to saving reconciliation with God.

It is a well-recognized principle that people are to be rated with the party with which their feelings and sympathies run. Whether in politics, Church, or

anything else, our true place is determined not so much by professions and formalities as by our fellow-feeling, interest, and sympathy. By name we may be of one party, while in heart and reality we are of another; and it is this temper of the heart that settles and determines it. After all else that may be said and done, it is our love to the brethren which decides what we are and where we belong.

Nothing more truly shows a man's heart and character than the society he seeks and in which he delights. If he likes the vulgar best, his heart and tastes are vulgar and his true classification is with the vulgar. As we sometimes see the sun reflected from the water when it is otherwise hidden, so we can better see peoples' true selves from what attracts their affections, pleases their tastes, and commands their fellowship than from their professions. The society which they most encourage and frequent or with which they are most in sympathy is the society to which they really belong. Those with whom they feel under constraint, with whom they are ill at ease, whom they would rather avoid and be rid of, whom they think ill of and dislike, with whom they disdain to make common cause, are foreigners to them, and of quite another community. The absence of a feeling of sympathetic brotherhood proves that we do not belong to the same fellowship with them. And the question whether we have passed from death unto life or not is necessarily settled and determined in the same way. Because we accept the Christian creed and profess Christ before men—because we have been baptized, enrolled as communicants of the

Church, and are found in our places in the observances of Christianity—or because we have gone through certain emotional tempests, ecstasies, and raptures,—it is not yet finally clear and certain that we are of those whom the Holy Ghost has renewed and made real members of Christ. All this may be, and still the soul be abiding in death. It is only in *love to the brethren* that we feel the pulse of spiritual life, and where that is absent the soul is still in death.

It lies in the nature of all genuine Christian experience for Christians to be interested in Christians, and to love those who have come to like precious faith and hope with themselves. There may be affection and lively sympathy for some because of their special attractiveness or their nearness to us in the relations of life, or for some special reason peculiar to their case with which religion has very little to do and which is no test of true Christian principle. The love of which the apostle is speaking is love to Christians—not because they please our fancy nor because they are possessed of so many attractive qualities that we cannot help but admire them, but because they are Christians and belong to the fellowship of Christianity. Loving Christian people because they present themselves as lovely is one thing, but loving them because they are of the same household of faith, without any other attractions, is quite another thing. And it is the latter, not the former, which is the proof that we have passed from death unto life.

A brother or a sister may not be outwardly attrac-

tive or otherwise agreeable, congenial, and commanding of our interest and respect; but to come to life and salvation in Christ is such a great, blessed, and absorbing thing, and works such thorough transformation in the affections and spirit, that one cannot experience it without being kindly drawn toward any and every one who comes before us as partaker in the same glorious grace. There necessarily goes with it a sympathetic interest for all who have come to such blessedness. We cannot help it. It is something that comes with the new life, so that we cannot have and retain the one without the other. If our whole heart is in Christianity, full of Christian faith and life, warmed with the joy of being born into the kingdom as a child of God, and animated with Christian affections, hopes, aims, and endeavors, we cannot be otherwise than drawn into living sympathy with every one who has made the same escape from condemnation and is engaged in the same struggle with the world, the flesh, and the devil, and has come into the same heavenly fellowship and community with ourselves. Taking Christ for our Saviour and God for our Father, we necessarily take every child of God as a brother or sister, and we must needs respect and love all whom God has raised up as His sons and daughters. They may not be what we would like to see them—some of them may be weak, deformed, crippled, or otherwise unattractive—but because they belong to the same sacred family with ourselves and are the children of the same Father, redeemed by the same Saviour, and living for the same heaven, if we have for them no

brotherly regard, no interest in their Christian progress and happiness, no good wishes or kind feelings for their welfare, it is plain proof that there is yet some fatal lack in the work of grace upon our own souls, and that we have no right to consider that we have passed from death unto life. Spite, hatred, and ill-will make up the essence of murder, "and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him."

It is also a plain Christian principle that we must copy after God, and be imitators of Him. How, then, did He act? When we were the enemies of God, rebels against Him, wearing the image and spirit of the devil himself, the heavenly Father loved us and gave His only-begotten Son to lay down His life for us, that He might become to us a Saviour and Redeemer. How, then, is it possible for us to wear the divine likeness or to have in us the Spirit of God if we are unwilling to exercise a fraternal kindness and a gracious consideration for even the meanest and unworthiest of His children? As He sacrificed for us and our welfare, so we must cast out of us every ill spirit, and be willing to make sacrifices to serve and benefit the brotherhood and to do good to all who are of the household of faith. A true Christian heart is always tender, sympathetic, and benevolent, fashioned after Him who is love; and "whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?"

Dear friends, how, then, does this matter stand

with you? As members of family circles, as members of the Church, as those who confess the same Saviour, kneel at the same altar, and blend your voices in the same petition that God should forgive you your trespasses as you forgive those who trespass against you, are you walking in charity and love with those associated with you? Are there any against whom you are entertaining feelings of envy, jealousy, or hatred, unwilling to acknowledge them or to take part where they are? Have you taken offence for which resentment still dwells in your heart, speaks in your actions, and sometimes gains utterance in your words? Are you living in uncharity and bitterness with any of your fellow Christians? O man! O woman! be admonished: this sort of thing will never do. It is not the spirit of Christ nor the spirit of love; and the heart in which it holds, and which it controls and governs, abideth in death. If people cannot forgive, and will disdain charitable and friendly regard toward each other, neither are they forgiven, and all their Christianity must pass for naught. "For every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God, and he that loveth not knoweth not God" (1 John 4 : 7, 8).

Third Sunday after Trinity.

1 Pet. 5 : 6–11 : Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time : casting all your care upon him ; for he careth for you.

Be sober, be vigilant ; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour : whom resist steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world.

But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you.

To him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

MANY ages have passed since the apostle Peter wrote these words. Many changes have also taken place. Revolution has succeeded revolution ; new continents have been discovered and peopled ; new languages and nationalities have been formed ; new conditions of society and government have arisen ; nearly all the elements entering into the economy of life have been greatly modified ; and much that was once called wisdom is such no longer. But God is the same. His plans and purposes stand unaltered. No mutations have come to His relations and administrations. His Gospel is what it always has been. The elements of Christian experience, life, and duty hold now as at the beginning. What the apostles gave out for the instruction, guidance, and consolation of the

Church in their day continues in full force. And what is contained in the text applies to us as well as to the scattered Christians to whom it was originally written.

Four things are here brought to our contemplation:

I. Our Christian Calling;
II. Our Trials under that Calling;
III. Our Duties under those Trials;
IV. Our Encouragement in those Duties.

And may the good Lord help us to consider them attentively, to the end that we may profit by these apostolic presentations!

I. Our Christian Calling.

The apostle Peter has much to say about our *call*, our being *called*, our *calling*. He exhorts his brethren to be holy in all manner of conversation, because He which had *called them* is holy. He speaks of them as *called* out of darkness into God's marvellous light. He exhorts them to patience in suffering and in well-doing, as thereunto *called*, that they might inherit a blessing. He treats of the addition of grace to grace in order to make their *calling* and election sure. He reminds them of what they had through the knowledge of Him who had *called them* to glory and virtue. And so in the text he tells of "the God of all grace, who hath *called us* unto His eternal glory." But in this Peter agrees with all the other apostles; for the Scriptures everywhere abound in

allusions to our "high calling of God in Christ Jesus."

This *call* or *calling* is the act of God in making known to us through the Gospel that it is His will and pleasure to save us from sin and condemnation through faith in Christ, to receive us into His favor, to sanctify us through His Spirit, and to bring us eventually to His everlasting kingdom. All who hear the Gospel or learn its contents are thereby *called;* for the Gospel is nothing else than the voice of God inviting sinners to forgiveness and salvation. The sounding of that gracious voice is likewise attended by the influences of the Holy Ghost, to open the heart to what is proclaimed, and to prompt and draw sinners to believe the Word and to become obedient followers of the divine will which it expresses. Many resist and grieve the Holy Spirit, refuse to yield themselves to His heavenly wooings, and so receive all this grace of God in vain. Others, however, receive and believe the Word, and turn from their sinful and carnal life to seek the proffered salvation, and so are said to be *effectually called.* They respond to God's invitation as given in the Gospel, and devoutly set themselves to obey the divine Word, and thus become a separate people from the rest of the world, being the followers of a peculiar *vocation.* They are *doers* of the Word, and not hearers only, and so are *the called* according to God's eternal purpose in Christ Jesus.

Such were the people to whom the apostle was writing. They had the Word as God at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto

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the fathers by the prophets, and also as spoken by Christ Himself, and confirmed unto them by those who heard Him. They had thus learned what the gracious will of the Father concerning them was, and had so embraced the heavenly tidings as to cleave to them, and to seek after the glory, honor, and immortality proposed in the Gospel. And thus they could be spoken of as persons whom the God of all grace had *called* to His eternal glory by Christ Jesus.

But these were not the only "partakers of the heavenly calling." There were others like them, both in their day and in every generation since. From that private room where the Paraclete descended in cloven tongues of light the Gospel Word went forth into all the world, everywhere winning to itself many willing and earnest believers; and from that time to the present it has never ceased to be proclaimed. Many nations have heard it, and nearly all the nations of the earth are hearing it to-day, even that same holy Gospel with all its precious offers of life and salvation to every one that believeth. Everywhere and always this preaching has found some to believe it, to build themselves upon it, and to count all earthly losses or crosses nothing if only they might attain to that eternal life promised to the faithful. Among these were our honored fathers who so grandly revoiced the evangelic truth for the modern ages, and to whose patrimony of unadulterated faith we have succeeded. Hearing as we do that same enduring Gospel, believing it to be the truth of God, and submitting ourselves in honesty

of heart to confess and obey it, we also are among these called ones.

An exceeding high calling it also is. It is not only a calling to virtue, holiness, and the excellences of a godly life, but to "*glory*." People have a high appreciation of glory. Just what it is they cannot exactly tell, but it glitters and dances in their imaginations as a bright and sunny thing, and strongly enlists the thoughts and cravings of mankind. Mostly, they connect it with worldly preferment, honor, success, and éclat; but the "glory" to which we are called by the Gospel is not a glory that fades with the occasion, or vanishes with the changes of earthly fortune, or ends in the grave. We are called to a divine, celestial, and abiding glory—the glory of reconciliation and likeness to God—the glory of citizenship in heaven—the glory of equality with angels—the glory of sonship in the divine family—the glory of joint-heirship with the Only-begotten of the Father to an incorruptible inheritance—even God's own eternal glory.

This, then, is our "holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ before the world began, but is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ" (2 Tim. 1 : 9, 10).

Notice,

II. Our Trials under this Calling.

Though the God of all grace hath called us unto "glory," we are not yet exempted from disturbances to our peace and comfort. There is joy in our call-

ing which the world can neither give nor take away, but we are minors yet, and have not come in full possession of our estate. We are still under discipline and training, involving many hardships and trials. This world is not our rest, and it has many adversities for the children of God. The apostle mentions three different sources from which the called of God are often made to suffer in their earthly pilgrimage.

The first is "the mighty hand of God." It became Him for whom are all things and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings; and the same necessity exists for a similar treatment of those sons themselves. We never could become what the good Father in heaven means us to be if He did not put us to many a sore trial and grief. Gold can only be purified from its dross by being put into the fires. A fruitful branch must be pruned and purged that it may bring forth more fruit. The wheat must endure the threshing that it may be separated from its chaff. An old author has said, "Rusty iron is made bright and smooth by the file; even so the old rusty Adam hath need of trouble to purge him from the cankered rust of sin." The vase has to be placed in the furnace that the graces which are to be its beauty and its glory may be burnt into it. The marble must be quarried out of its bed, and cut and chiselled and rasped, before the statue that is in it can stand forth for beholders to admire. The most attractive lawns are those that are mown the oftenest. The field that is never torn

up by the plough yields only a harvest of weeds and briers. And so it is necessary that God should betimes lay His mighty hand upon us and visit us with many and varied afflictions, that He may perfect us in character and grace and train and discipline us for our destiny of honor and glory.

God's hand is in everything, but many of His afflictive providences are specially ordered for the trial and development of His saints. "Whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth" (Heb. 12:6). He sees in us certain evils to be cured or some worse evils to be prevented —some excrescences to be removed, some tendencies to be corrected, some wrong humors to be expelled —some dangers to be avoided—which require sharp and afflicting applications. He accordingly sends trials upon us, not to make us miserable, but to make us humble; not to ruin, but to reduce us, not in anger, but out of the most loving regard for our eternal good and happiness. If we endure chastening, God dealeth with us as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? And thus by the special dealing of God we are often brought into fiery trials.

Another source of sorrow to Christians in this world is found in the painful anxieties of earthly life. We cannot live without cares—many cares, distressing cares, cares under which it is often hard to bear up. At the best, human life is never without cares. All our supplies and enjoyments are imperfect and uncertain. No one has everything that he considers important to his happiness, and many are often in

great straits to secure what is really essential to their ordinary comfort. There be few people who do not wish for what they have not; and those wishes, in proportion to their fervency and the hindrances to their gratification, become afflicting anxieties. Days and junctures come when everything looks dark, discouraging, and alarming. The soul is disturbed and oppressed as to how to bear up under the ill-fortune that is upon it, or escape the impending calamity, or get through the thickening evils. The questions about getting a living, bread, clothing, and shelter—how to make ends meet, and how to get on amid circumstances so adverse—often burden, afflict, and torture the soul, while yet no door opens and no light comes. And the cares of this world are apt to be men's greatest troubles.

And still another source of suffering mentioned by the apostle is the persecuting and malignant power of Satan. There is a kingdom of darkness, a great spiritual confederation of evil, of which Satan is the head. Possessed of an angelic nature, but apostate from God, he has become the subtle impersonation of enmity and hatred to his Maker, to all holy beings, and to all good. From the beginning he has been the murderer, deceiver, adversary, and spoliator of our race. No calamity or disaster has ever happened but he was at the bottom of it. All bad passions, all deluding falsehoods, all mal-administrations, all apostasies in morals and religion, all sin, death, and judgment, have had their origin or occasion in him and his malicious machinations. He dragged the early world to corruptions which brought

the destroying Flood. He instigated the idolatries which betrayed the heathen nations into their long darkness and miseries. He brought about all the murderous tyrannies, oppressions, wars, persecutions, and political abominations which have filled the earth and crowded the ages. He it is who has swayed and disordered the thinking and philosophies of men, inflamed their passions, and made so many the willing slaves of unbelief, lust, and ruinous falsehood. He is to this hour the very god of this world, which lieth in his bosom, draws from him most of its warmth and inspirations, and is more or less led captive by his will. One of the most subtle of creatures, he has wound his serpent folds about everything, and is ever active to make firm his dominion and to corrupt, hinder, and destroy whatever is good. The time is coming when his power shall be abolished, his works destroyed, and his foul influence brought to a perpetual end; but for the present, though not without certain limits and restraints, he is allowed to ply his evil genius and exert his craft. All evil men are his subjects, and in them he lives and reigns. By false science and perverted religion he deceives and beguiles multitudes. By earthly pleasures, vanities, honors, and possessions he stirs up lusts, covetousness, and greed, stimulates aggressive passions, instigates selfish and malignant combinations, incites to misrule and cruel wars, making havoc of the peace and order of the world and rendering the earth hot with fiery trials for the saints. And in one way or another he is ever at work, heated with a confirmed malignity which will

not let him rest from his craving for the blood of souls, or his eagerness to afflict and torment the people whom he cannot beguile with his blandishments or deceive with his falsities.

When the apostle spoke of this adversary as a rampant and devouring lion, he doubtless had in mind the fierce persecutions of the Church which the Jews were then waging, and to which the pagan governments were being incited. He and his agents were the authors of these murderous doings to crush the Saviour's cause, which so afflicted the saints that many made shipwreck of their profession, or had to suffer the loss of home and country, and even yield up their lives as martyrs. The history of the Church of those times is a history of blood. Jews and heathen vied with each other in the fierceness of their onslaughts upon Christians, turning many back to perdition, while others were scattered abroad, cast into prison, cruelly mocked and scourged, stoned to death, slain with the sword, or made to wander about in sheepskins and goatskins, destitute, afflicted, tormented, and compelled to hide away in deserts and mountains, seeking asylum in dens and caves of the earth. This was the chief attitude of the adversary in those days, stalking abroad in the majesty and stealth of the bloodthirsty lion seeking whom he might devour, and roaring for his prey in the anathemas of the Sanhedrim and the imperial edicts of pagan Rome.

It is not exactly so now. The just judgments of God and the victories of the Cross have wrought important changes in the condition of human affairs.

But improvement has not gone so far as to exempt Christians from the assaults and temptations of the devil. If Satan has been forced to lay off the form of a roaring lion and a devouring dragon, he has learned to transform himself into the appearance of an angel of light, to seduce and mislead where he can no longer terrify with fagot and sword. He has found ways to carry on his work of spoliation under more flattering disguises and more subtle temptations. But now, as ever, he is still our adversary, malignant, cunning, active, cruel, deceitful, great in power, having many confederates from both earth and hell, and the source of unnumbered horrid assaults, trials, and torments to the saints.

These, then, are so many sources of trouble to God's people in this world, from which no sacredness of their calling can exempt them.

Notice, now,

III. Our Duties under these Trials.

These are as distinctly given by the apostle as the sources whence our afflictions come.

Under the mighty hand of God we are to *humble ourselves*. People are apt to become impatient under adversities, but the apostle would have us receive all God's appointments with devout submission, and to endure our trials and hardships without murmuring or rebellion against His providence. Paul says, "We have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live? For they verily for a few days chastened us after

their own pleasure; but He for our profit, that we might be partakers of His holiness" (Heb. 12 : 9, 10). The paternal rod needs to be met with a childlike spirit, that it may be followed with healing and joy; otherwise the strokes redouble, and what was meant for remedy becomes ruin. No one can ever harden himself against God and prosper: and, when under God's adverse providences, to rave like wild beasts in a net or to murmur, grumble, and fret like spoiled children, only makes the matter worse and cheats us out of the benefits intended. What if our plans are frustrated, our expectations blasted, our possessions scattered to the winds, our comforts wilted, and our daylight turned to darkness? Though compelled to live martyr lives and lie in martyr graves, God is on the throne. Our names are graven on His hands. We have not dropped out from remembrance in His Father-heart. Neither is the sorrow unmixed. The night still has its stars and leads to a brighter morning. And all the accumulated ills of earth are naught in comparison with the imperishable glories of eternity. In any case, God is God, and it is for us to humble ourselves before Him, and accept the bitterest cup His hand presents to our lips with the submissive "Not my will, but Thine, O Lord, be done."

Amid the many cares and anxieties of life the direction is equally clear. There is One to care for us better than we can care for ourselves. Though the fig tree blossom not, and no fruit be in the vines; though the labor of the olive fail, and the fields yield no bread; though the flock be cut off from the fold,

and no herd be in the stalls,—the child of God is not without resources and the fountains of his joy are not utterly dried up. Though borne down with misfortune, and reduced to straits in which he cannot see whence his next meal is to come, there is no just reason why he should despair. Beside him walks the mighty Lord, whose strength is the stay of ten thousand worlds, and whose plenteous store all creatures in the universe cannot exhaust. Is the burden more than we can bear? The word is, Cast it upon the living God—cast it *all* upon Him. Nor is there the least presumption in compliance with the exhortation, for He knoweth what things we have need of and "He careth for us."

What saith the blessed Saviour? "Take no thought [no over-anxious solicitude] for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment? Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they? And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: and yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, shall He not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?" (Matt. 6: 25–30).

People often worry themselves with illegitimate cares, which they might avoid if they chose. Such

they may not hopefully cast on God. Some have very false views of what is necessary to their happiness, and cherish very inordinate and unreasonable desires. Some disquiet themselves out of mere desire for show, out of selfish ambition and pride. They are anxious for what they have no occasion to covet, and are disturbed with apprehensions which should cause them no alarm. Such cares God has not engaged to bear for us, and to ask Him to do it is to propose that He become the servant of our selfishness and vanity. There be also some burdens of care which God means that we shall bear ourselves, and which He will not lift off, though we entreat it ever so humbly. A Paul may pray to be relieved of the thorn in his flesh, and yet be obliged to keep it, because he needs it. In such case we must meekly submit to the wiser appointment of God, resting on the promise that no harm shall come of it and that His grace shall be sufficient for us.

And as to the devil's assaults, we are not without the means of triumphing over him also if only we diligently use them. Standing fast in the faith, courageously resisting him, we may get the victory over the worst that he can do. But in order to this we must be sober, self-possessed, and ever-vigilant, lest we be taken at a disadvantage, entrapped by his snares, or surprised into defeat. We must not underrate the foe. Our wrestling is not merely against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual hosts of wickedness. We

must therefore be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might, and put on the whole armor of God. Girt with truth, plated with righteousness, shod with the preparation of the Gospel of peace, taking the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God, and praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance, we shall be able to stand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Thus resisting the devil, he will fly from us.

And now a word concerning

IV. Our Encouragement in these Duties.

First of all, we must not forget that the way of patient humility is the way to glory. "God resisteth the proud," but He "giveth grace to the humble." Submitting ourselves meekly to the allotments of our heavenly Father, it is part of His gracious covenant to exalt us in due time. Paul unmurmuringly suffered the loss of all things for Christ, and his name has become the most illustrious in Christendom, next to that of Jesus Himself. It is the certain law of the administrations of God to abase the proud and to exalt the humble. It may be hard to bear the chastening rod, but he that endureth it with patience shall reap from it a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. Submission to the cross is ever the way to the crown.

We are likewise to remember that, bad as our estate in this world may be, we are not alone in it. "The same afflictions are accomplished in our breth-

ren." Weak human nature leads each to think his own troubles the worst, and that none have sorrow like to his sorrow. It is not so. The Saviour suffered far beyond any of His followers. The prophets and apostles had sorer tribulation than anything appointed to us. Nor are our trials other than those common unto men. Hot as the furnace may be, there are many to walk with us in the midst of the fires.

Precious also is the assurance that, whatever our earthly burden may be, God is caring for us. No Christian is ever out of His tender consideration. No arrow ever pierces a good man's heart but it has first been dipped in the heavenly Father's love. There is not a stroke of the rod laid upon a child of His but draws the pitying compassion from His Father-heart. Nor will He ever leave or forsake them that put their trust in Him.

Furthermore, Jehovah's infinite wisdom and goodness have carefully calculated all our trials, and He has engaged to overrule them for our greater advantage. He sends or permits them that He may make us perfect, stablish us, strengthen us, settle us. Never a stroke or sorrow more can touch us than He sees to be needful or that is not inwoven with His gracious forethought for our present and immortal good. It is a fact, certified to us in the whole character of God, that we would be the losers if our afflictions were any less than they are. The stones which never feel the tools of the sculptor have not been chosen for a destiny of honor, nor ever a cut or stroke is allowed to touch the chosen block beyond

what is requisite to its finishing for place in the gallery of beauty and renown.

And at the worst our sufferings are only for "*a while*"—ὀλίγον, *a little while*. They are only intermittent while they last, and soon end for ever. What is an earthly lifetime compared with eternity? What are the partial distresses of a few days, salved and modified as they are by so many heavenly emollients, to an immortality of unmingled blessedness? And, called by the God of all grace to His eternal glory, what are these few privations and trials by the way, which are presently to be lost and forgotten amid the sublimities of an unfading heaven?

Ah, yes, dear friends, there was reason why the apostle should break out in ascriptions of glory and dominion for ever and ever to Him who has called us to so high a destiny, and is meanwhile so graciously dealing with us to fit us for it.

Then be resigned,
Thou child of sorrow, to His sovereign will;
Drink, as He bids, the bitter cup, and bear
Thy cross in patience. From the holy hill
A gleam shall cheer thee, till, safe harbored there,
Thou feel how faintly earth's severest ill
May with the weight of heavenly joys compare.

Fourth Sunday after Trinity.

Rom. 8: 18–23: For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.

For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God.

For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope; because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God.

For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now: and not only they, but ourselves also, which have the first-fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.

ASSIVE are the conceptions which here come before us. They touch all creation, all time, all eternity. They take in what was, what is, and what is to be respecting ourselves and the entire system of things by which we are surrounded. But the whole burden of the passage sums up in two points:

I. The Present Suffering;
II. The Coming Glory.

And may the Holy Spirit, given to help the infirmities of God's children amid their earthly weakness, help us to grasp the truth and to find comfort in it!

I. The Present Suffering.

Foremost in the apostle's mind are the sufferings of Christians. He assumes it as a settled truth that believers, although sons and heirs of God and joint-heirs with Jesus Christ, have much to endure while in this present world. Of this he himself was a marked example. So long as he floated with the current and moved with the ideas of the world around him his days were prosperous. All applauded him, and even the great and exalted were his friends. But when he became a Christian and gave himself in solemn earnestness to follow and serve his Saviour, everything in this respect took on a change. His Christian career began with suffering. As his spiritual eyes opened there came a shock to his whole nature which struck him with temporary blindness. Opening his mouth to testify for Christ, the hounds of persecution began to howl for his destruction, and never ceased to pursue him until his head was severed from his body by the hand of the public executioner at Rome. Elsewhere he tells through what perils, labors, stripes, prisons, stonings, shipwrecks, privations, and varied sufferings his whole life lay, rendering it betimes almost impossible for him to bear up under the burden of his afflictions. He was thus himself a marked illustration of the fact that a life of devotion to Christ must needs be a life of suffering. Nor was he singular in this. All do not suffer as much as he, but in this world we all have tribulation. Many also are the trials and afflictions peculiar to the children of God which fall to their lot in this world because they are Christians.

It is spoken for all the followers of Christ, where it is said, "We that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened;" and the very glory for which we hope, and to which faith has made us heirs, tends to make us groan and sigh the more, in that so long as we are on earth we are severed from our inheritance.

Transcendent grace pertains to the saints already in this world. Christ's mediation has availed to secure for us the ministrations of the Spirit, the first-fruits of which were poured out on the day of Pentecost and ever continue with the Church. The blessed, regenerating, quickening, illuminating, guiding, and comforting offices of the Holy Ghost we therefore possess. Believers have this Spirit, and being led by the Spirit, they are "the sons of God." They have "received the Spirit of adoption," by which they cry, Abba, Father, though the adoption be not yet made manifest. "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God; and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Jesus Christ" (Rom. 8 : 14–17). True believers are therefore a people chosen and anointed of God to very exalted relationships and a very glorious destiny. But for the present neither their divine sonship nor their glory is "revealed." No one can tell just who they are. Their "life is hid with Christ in God." The world knoweth them not, as it did not know Christ. They have in them something of the Father's likeness, and are pervaded with something of the Father's Spirit, but they do not yet reign, and are yet under tutors and governors, in which they differ not from servants. Many

of them are obscured by infirmities, by poverty, by such humbleness of station as to seem the most inconsiderable of people. Men pass them and never lift an eye upon them, never bestow upon them a thought. If men notice them, it is mostly to accuse, denounce, and abuse them as scarcely worth civil respect, much less friendly regard. The world despises their profession, and is prone to brand them as crazy or hypocrites for presuming to be different from other people. A veil of flesh and humility conceals their heavenly dignity and sublime status. The covering yet remains to be lifted off, their glory to be revealed, their true estate to be shown. With all their high possessions, they are obliged to put up with a condition of humiliation, disability, and suffering in complete contrast with their divine sonship and appointed destiny. They still groan within themselves, waiting and yearning for that open and public adoption—to wit, the redemption of their bodies. They are even worse off in this world because of their efforts and aims to secure the glories of the next than if they were not of the lineage of faith.

But they do not suffer alone. Christ also suffered. Nor Christ only, "For we know that the whole creation travaileth in pain together until now." Whether we understand this of the heathen world, or, in stricter accord with the terms of everything which God at the beginning created and made, the statement is true. Certainly, the whole world of mankind, with whatever else, is included in the description. The word *κτισις*, *creation*, runs mostly on the idea of uni-

versal nature; but it also designates the persons to whom the Gospel is ordained to be preached—"every creature," "all nations," the whole unregenerate world. Up to the time of the apostle, and until now, the world out of Christ has been, and is, in bondage, disability, and distress, under which, in a thousand ways, it has ever been stretching out its neck in hope of deliverance. Fallen humanity has ever been conscious of its disinheritance by the fall, and has never failed to yearn and struggle, though mostly in wrong directions, for emancipation from its ill condition of darkness, sorrow, and death. From the beginning Christ has thus been, in some sense, "The Desire of all nations," as in Him alone the coveted deliverance is to be found, while the power of an unknown grace has ever been at work in preparing anxious and thirsting souls for the hearing of the Word of life and ultimate new birth into the mystical body of the great Redeemer, to share the liberty and glory of the children of God.

But the world of things around us is likewise included. The description applies more literally and directly to universal nature, which largely shares in the humiliation, bondage, and distress brought about by human apostasy. In the beginning, when the creation-work was first completed, "God saw everything that He had made, and, behold, it was very good" (Gen. 1 : 31). Traces of that primeval excellence still remain, and the earth, with all that relates to it, has not ceased to attest the goodness and glory of the great Maker. But when man fell, a dark eclipse came over nature, as well as over man him-

self. When the forbidden fruit was eaten "earth felt the wound, and Nature from her seat gave signs of woe." Man rebelled against God, and creation rebelled against man, and disorder, confusion, and ailment entered. There is much that is attractive and beautiful, but it is sadly marred, blotted, damaged, and intermixed with what is repulsive and grievous. We may rejoice in the bright purity of the waters as they spring from the earth and gayly dance and laugh in their happy flow, but we have only to look a little farther to be repelled by the sluggish morass exhaling pestilence and death. We may admire the Creator's goodness as we follow the lark in his skyward song, filling the empyrean with glad melody, but when the fierce hawk darts upon him, tears him to pieces, and drinks his blood, a different feeling presses upon the soul and fills it with sad doubts. Nature is still good and serves many great and blessed ends. Its subjection to vanity is not for utter destruction, but in hope of ulterior glory. Yet it has become erratic in many of its manifestations, and pervaded with much that is afflictive and sorrowful. We sing of the verdant fields and golden harvests and lowing herds and bleating flocks and dewing mornings and golden sunsets and joyous loves; but what shall we say when the land mourns and the herbs of the field wither, and blight and desolation fill the world with want and wretchedness? when fire and flood and war and pestilence and death stalk abroad? when sickness, bereavement, hunger, nakedness, cold, famine, earthquakes, tornadoes, volcanic eruptions, serpent plagues, savage depredations, and

the thousand forms of earthly disaster are let loose. Can we sing of these, and treasure them in our imaginations as among fair Nature's beauties? When the sun must shine to light villains to their deeds of crime, the atmosphere yield itself to vocalize untruth, profanities, and blasphemies, the ground bring forth to nourish people who are the disgrace of the world, brute creatures toil and agonize for godless tyrants and harsh oppressors, fields stript of their good products to distil curses on innocent homes and immortal souls, mines reft of their precious treasure to inflame the greed of covetousness, adorn proud profligates and harlots, and illuminate and warm the dens of infamy,—are we to conclude that these are the primeval offices of God's good creations? Is it not manifest that all nature is the victim of some great deranging calamity—that the whole creation, contrary to its will, is made subject to vanity?

Nor is the world of things about us insensible to this state of disorder and humiliation. A great German poet, with no faith in revelation, yet has written, "Often have I had the feeling as if nature, in wailing sadness, entreated something of me." Dumb creatures cannot speak as we do, but they have a language nevertheless, and everywhere it is largely the language of sore complaint and imploring petition. "We know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now." The horse chafing against the bit, galled with burdens, trembling under the scourge, and straining all its bones to the merciless demands of its exacting master; the ox struggling against the force that drags him to the

slaughter; the dog howling under the cruel lash; the antelope crushed by the lion's paw; the elephant toiling at the launch; the hooked fish dangling on the angler's line; the wild bird gasping out its life from the fowler's shot; crashing forests being torn with denuding storms; the earth reeling and rumbling with its shaking fits; the sea moaning in its unrest and dashing in tidal waves of destruction; and a thousand things pining, bleeding, limping, sorrowing, crying, dying,—all combine to swell out a universal groan of an injured and suffering creation. Man is an infected being, and so he is assigned an infected world to live in. He is a criminal, and it belongs to him to have an incommodious, frowning, and dismantled home. He is a convict king, and must endure a resentful and disobedient empire. And by reason of his sin nature is in disorder, creation is in sackcloth and crape, and the voice of woe and sadness mingles with all the utterances of this mundane universe.

This, then, is the apostle's description of the present suffering.

Let us now briefly contemplate,

II. The Coming Glory.

The text speaks of "the glory which shall be revealed in us." What that glory is cannot now be seen by earthly eyes, for it remains to be manifested. It is not yet evident to human sight. Something of it is indeed made known to faith and hope, so that it can be anticipated and somewhat realized in expectation. Paul reckoned upon it, looked to it though

invisible, preached it, and held it forth to all believers as the crowning thing in Christianity. He describes it under three conceptions: "the manifestation of the sons of God;" "deliverance from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God;" and "the adoption, to wit, the redemption of the body."

From this it appears that the glory of which he speaks is something which cannot be realized, except in its hidden and incipient beginnings, so long as the present dispensation lasts; for in this life or on this side of the day of judgment the sons of God are never manifested, never get beyond the clogs and fetters of corruption, never enjoy the fulness of their liberty, never come to that publicity of their adoption which depends on "the redemption of the body."

And for the same reason the glory in contemplation cannot be fully realized in the state between death and the resurrection; for during all that period an essential part of man remains under the bondage of corruption, deeper even than during earthly life. And whatever advance may be in the condition of the souls of the saints at death, there is no participation in it on the part of the groaning creation around us. Spiritually, and only in a way largely unmanifested, something very blessed of this glory is already experienced and possessed by believers; but it is, after all, chiefly in prospect, and enjoyed and possessed more in hope than in actual fruition. A great and mighty change, affecting both the living and the dead, must first come, which only can come

with the resurrection, before there is any full realization of the kingdom of glory.

The contemplation of the apostle is that of a general *παλίγγενεσία*, or *regenesis*, which Peter calls "the restitution of all things." It is the same of which the Saviour speaks where He tells of "*the regeneration, when the Son of man shall sit upon the throne of His glory.*" This *regeneration* is of very wide range, and comprehends the putting forth of redemptive power on three distinct yet related theatres. The first is the *soul* as it is now being quickened and renewed by the Holy Ghost through faith in the Gospel. Hence believers are spoken of as regenerated, born again, created anew, even in this life. But this renewal in the spirit of the mind is not yet a regeneration of the physical man. Believers, though they have the first-fruits of the Spirit, must still carry the old corrupt and dying body, which, however much it may be profited by the renewal of the Spirit, is still not essentially renewed until the resurrection. It is only when the resurrection comes that the body will be regenerated, by being changed, glorified, and made like unto the glorious body of our Lord. And this is the *regeneration* wrought out upon its second theatre, which is accomplished only when the whole man is completely redeemed from all bondage to corruption of every sort and degree, and enters upon the glorious liberty of the children of God.

But, as the body is a part of a material creation, its regenesis by resurrection carries the delivering process into the physical world also, which must

needs share in the transformation. And thus, as the apostle says, "the creation itself shall be delivered," and universal nature reach the goal for which it groans and yearns and stretches out its neck in expectation; which completes the *regeneration* on its third sphere, realized in the new heavens and the new earth.

What, then, is "the glory that is to be revealed in us"? First of all is our manifestation as the sons of God. It needs to be shown who those sons of God are. They need to appear in their true place, relations, and dignity. Now they are unknown, or appear only as the children of sorrow, disregarded, neglected, looked down upon, and despised by the world. Their princely exaltation is not recognized. Their real position in the universe as coheirs and coregents with Jesus in eternal empire is all concealed and hidden in the humbleness of their earthly estate. But then when the Son of man is revealed, and shall sit upon the throne of His glory, and every eye shall see Him, and every knee in heaven and earth and under the earth shall bow before His ineffable majesty, all His followers shall appear with Him and be like Him, sharers of His throne and dominion, joint regents with Him in the sublime administrations of His power, immortal in body and soul as He is immortal, crowned as He is crowned, acknowledged in their place and dignity as He is acknowledged, and thenceforward for ever known, recognized, and honored by all the universe as the regal sons of the Lord God almighty.

Nor shall all this be in outward estate only, but in

all the personal attributes and excellences pertaining to positions so high and glories so exalted. Whatever disabilities are upon the sons of God now will then be lifted off, every hold of corruption broken, every bond of infirmity dissolved, every hindrance to perfect freedom for ever gone. All the principles of truth and holiness will then have passed into them, so as to be their very nature and the spontaneous impulse of their being. Set free to act independent of all constraint, and inwardly choosing, approving, loving, and enjoying only the good and eternal will of God, they are for ever enfranchised in all that ennobles moral being, the happy possessors of perfect and glorious liberty.

And coincident with this manifestation and enfranchisement of the children of God is the corresponding deliverance and thorough regeneration of the yearning and groaning creation. Signs and symptoms of such a release of suffering nature, and its participation in the great redemption, ever attend where grace succeeds to the command of the soul. "A righteous man regardeth the life of his beast" (Prov. 12 : 10). The condition of cattle and horses and all domestic animals is better by reason of the Spirit's renewal of men's hearts. This is the symptomatic token that when man's redemption is complete all the ills and ailments and disorders which have come into the creation by reason of man's sin will again disappear. So far as God's curse upon sin has affected the earth or anything pertaining to it, that trouble must be obliterated; for it is written that then "there shall be no more curse" (Rev. 22 : 3).

The miracles of Christ point to the same thing, for we fail to perceive their full significance if we do not see in them the samples and earnests of the universal going forth of His restoring power to "make all things new." Nature itself also seems to have some mysterious consciousness of a better state to come, and everywhere shows an upward longing and struggling and sighing to reach a higher condition. The cramped seed seeks out the crevice to put forth into the light. The plant in the cave still dreams of the sun, and turns itself toward his hidden face in hope of finding some blessed baptism from his unveiled rays. The ivy springs up from the earth and climbs to cover the ruins of the shattered oak and fallen wall. It is not mere poetic fancy, for here stand the words of inspiration, that "the earnest expectation of the creation waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God." Nor is it a stretching out for what is never to be reached; for it is here further written that "the creation itself shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God." Thus, then, the *regeneration* now begun in the renewal of believing souls must needs go on to accomplish the redemption and renewal of their bodies also. And when the sons of God are fully manifested in their true place and character, the same transforming and restoring process shall reach the whole system of created things, animate and inanimate, and not stop until this ailing and disordered earth and heavens likewise experience the new genesis, which shall change creation's groans to songs and turn all the

sufferings of this present time into the joys of Paradise regained. Nothing less than this can be called Redemption, or answer the description of "the restitution of all things which God hath spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began." And as God is true, and as Christ is the second Adam to recover what was forfeited and lost by the first, all this must surely come to pass.

And verily it will be glory then. Think of "the dragon, that old serpent, which is the devil and Satan," who has been so long despoiling and afflicting our world, finally expelled and cast into the lake of fire, whence he shall come no more out! Think of sin, with all its fretting miseries, for ever purged away from the souls, bodies, and dwelling-place of man, and with death and Hades and all its children consumed in the second death! Think of the holy and mighty Son of the Highest, with all His faithful confessors, instated and revealed in the fulness of righteous dominion and immortal honor! Think of afflicted and sorrowing nature completely delivered from its hard subjection to vanity and its oppressive bondage to corruption, and recovered to paradisiac harmony, beauty, and peace! Think of the earth by Christ's redemptive power restored to the happy sisterhood of unfallen worlds, the more interesting for the fires through which it has passed, and standing forth as the eternal monument of the unfathomable love and grace of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost! Think of that prayer of all saints, "Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven," fully answered, so to need to be prayed no

more! Think of the world finally redeemed by power as it is now by price, having for its metropolis that New Jerusalem, God-built, glittering with gold and jewels as a bride prepared for her husband, blessed by the pure river of water of life clear as crystal proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb, and radiant in heavenly light in which the nations of them that are saved walk and exult for ever! Think of the great Alleluia of salvation and glory and honor and power unto the Lord God thrilling in the heart of every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and in the sea, and sounding on unbroken, world without end! Ay, this is GLORY—the glory that is to be revealed at the manifestation of the sons of God.

Great has been the suffering of this present time. For six thousand years has this lower world from earth and sky been wailing its mighty *miserere*. Who can measure the tears that have been shed since Adam went weeping from Eden? What fathom-line can reach the bottom of the pains and death-agonies and pangs of grief and sufferings of the saints, and disasters to the peace of men, and horrors of war, and woes of oppression, and wrecks of happiness, and accumulations of blasted hopes, which have filled this world since Abel fell a victim to his brother's murderous passion? What Niagaras of groans and wretchedness have been pouring out from afflicted nature since the curse fell upon the ground for Adam's disobedience? Who shall sum up all the anguish and the woe which the reign of disease and death and sin has wrought, and so give

the dimensions of the sufferings of this present time? And yet the record here is, made out by the reckoning of inspired genius, that all of it together is not worthy to be compared with the glory to be revealed at the manifestation of the sons of God. Bring every ache and tear and pain and sorrow and distress and wrong and cross that earth or man has ever felt, and heap all together into the balance against the glory to come; yet it is all scarce a feather to a ton in comparison with that "*eternal weight of glory*" which is then to be revealed.

Dear friends, "it doth not yet appear what we shall be." We must take all by faith in what our God hath spoken. But everywhere and from every point of contemplation the testimony is that eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive, what God hath in reserve for them that love Him. But of this may we ever be assured, that when He who is our life shall appear, we also shall appear with Him in glory. The only question is, Have we received Him to cleave to Him as our Lord and Saviour? If so, then are we the sons of God; for to as many as receive Him He giveth power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name. "And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Jesus Christ; if so be that we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified together"—His glory our glory, His estate our estate, His throne our throne, His home our home.

See, then, what a terrible thing is sin, what mischiefs it has wrought, what ills it has begotten, what

woes and spoliations it has introduced into God's glorious creations, what ever-burning tracks it has left whithersoever it has gone, and what ages and expenditures of effort and toils and blood it costs to remove it!

> Oh, cursed, cursed sin! traitor to God
> And ruiner of man! mother of woe,
> And Death, and Hell!

See, also, the tremendous merit, might, and majesty of our Saviour's glorious mediatorship to procure and achieve a redemption so far-reaching and so great. What a strength of moral leverage is that which can lift a blasted world out of the seething sea of everlasting death!

> **Shout, heaven and earth, this sum of good to man!**

Fifth Sunday after Trinity.

1 Pet. 3 : 8–15 : Finally, be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another; love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous: not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing: but contrariwise, blessing; knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye should inherit a blessing.

For he that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile: let him eschew evil and do good: let him seek peace, and ensue it.

For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil.

And who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good? But and if ye suffer for righteousness' sake, happy are ye; and be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled; but sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear.

THESE words describe the art of making good days out of evil days. The philosophers have thought and searched for some art or principle by which to turn common things to gold. It has proved a vain and foolish search. Yet there is an art by which one can turn the very ills and disorders of life into something more precious than gold. It is an art taught and learned in the school of Christ, and which becomes efficient in our hands just in proportion as we are true Christians and apt in putting His gracious

instructions into willing and earnest practice. It is an art which relates particularly to the government of our temper and conduct. The successful cultivation of this art, as urged upon us in the text, ranges through three general spheres;

I. The Temper and Conduct of Christians with reference to Each Other;
II. The Temper and Conduct of Christians with reference to Those who Wrong or Persecute them;
III. The Temper and Conduct of Christians with reference to Society in General.

I propose, therefore, to sort out from these apostolic admonitions what relates to these several spheres, and to note briefly the nature of the several inculcations, praying God that He may enable us to understand and apply them to our profit.

I. In the sphere of the relations of Christians to one another we are to turn evil times into good by the cultivation and exercise of

1. *Unity of mind.* "Be ye all of one mind," or, Be all like-minded, says the apostle. This is that minding of the same thing, that joining together in the same mind in the same judgment, of which Paul speaks, and which he invokes upon the churches as a most precious gift. It includes unity in doctrinal views, but not so much that as a unanimity of heart springing from a conscious community of origin, relations, interests, aims, and hopes. It is the like-

mindedness of a harmonious family in which all are swayed by the same impulses for the common good. Christians are all members of the one household of faith, fellow-citizens in the same spiritual kingdom, and copartners in the same labors, sufferings, and hopes; and they are to recognize and deal toward each other as such, feeling that what affects one affects all, so that if one member suffer, all the members suffer with it. Very diverse have been the associations of those who are brought together in Christ Jesus; but as they come to have one God and Father of all, one Lord Jesus Christ in whom they hope, and one purpose of life before them, their diversities of outward circumstances are to be sunk in the greatness of their one high calling. Rescued from a common ruin, depending upon the same grace, heirs together of the same salvation, eating the same spiritual bread, beset by the same common infirmities and foes, and all filled with the same noble desires to serve and glorify God, it becomes them to receive and deal with each other as such, show the same mind one toward another, dwell and labor in harmony, and with one mind and one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

2. *Having compassion one of another:* not only sympathy in each other's trials and sorrows, but a general fellow-feeling in everything that concerns the weal or woe of any portion of the family. We are elsewhere directed to weep with them that weep and to rejoice with them that rejoice. We are to be alive to each other's losses or successes, bear each other's burdens, and be glad over each other's vic

tories. Very beautiful and softening to all earth's ruggedness also is such a spirit.

> Like the sweet melody which faintly lingers
> Upon the wind-harp's strings at close of day,
> When, gently touched by evening's dewy fingers,
> It breathes a low and melancholy lay;
> So the calm voice of sympathy me seemeth;
> And while its magic spell is round me cast,
> My spirit in its cloistered silence dreameth,
> And vaguely blends the future with the past.

It is—

> The silver link, the silken tie,
> Which heart to heart, and mind to mind,
> In body and in soul can bind.

And if Christians will only have compassion one of another, it will go far to turn even their sorrows into joys.

3. *Loving as brethren*, being Philadelphians in the truest spiritual sense. There is a brotherhood of humanity in general, on the basis of which affection is demanded toward all men; but there is a closer, higher, more heavenly brotherhood in Christ Jesus —a kindred and nearness not of earth between those who have been born again to newness of life—which calls for a tenderer and more domestic affection and the warmer and fuller charities which brother renders toward brother. These we are to bestow upon each other as members together of the same family of faith; and this can make much of earth's darkness as if it were not.

> There is in life no blessing like affection:
> It soothes, it hallows, elevates, subdues,
> And bringeth down to earth its native heaven.

4. *Pitiful*, tender-hearted toward the unfortunate and the suffering, is the proper Christian also to be. Christianity is the religion of love, and love is kind, especially to those in distress. "Put on, therefore," says Paul, "bowels of mercy, kindness." As our blessed Master can be touched with the feeling of our infirmity, so are we to be, especially toward our suffering brethren.

'Tis a little thing
To give a cup of water; yet its draught
Of cool refreshment, drained by fevered lips,
May give a shock of pleasure to the frame
More exquisite than when nectarean juice
Renews the life of joy in happiest hours.
It is a little thing to speak a phrase
Of common comfort, which, by daily use,
Has almost lost its sense; yet on the ear
Of him who thought to die unmourned 't will fall
Like choicest music; fill the glazèd eye
With gentle tears; relax the knotted hand
To know the bonds of fellowship again.

5. *Friendliness* is still another item of the prescription. This is ever the mysterious cement of souls, the sweetener of life, and solder of society. And the constant culture of kind intercourse and offices of mutual respect between the members of Christ must carry with it untold good to render our days blessed.

The deep perennial source of purest bliss,
The proof of goodness, and the solid stamp
Of blessed piety, the hallowed base
On which the Christian virtues love to rest,

is this same attribute of humble friendliness and courtesy.

II. Consider this holy art in relation to those who wrong and persecute us. It is impossible, in a world like ours, never to encounter violence and calumny. This is the more true of faithful Christians, whom the world hates. How, then, are such evil days to be turned to good? We are not left uninformed.

1. We must keep far from us a hasty and retaliatory temper, "*not rendering evil for evil or railing for railing.*" If we suffer injury, we must remember that two wrongs can never make a right. In the world of nature we may use fire to resist fire, but in the world of proper Christianity and moral prosperity this must never be. Christ Himself has set us the right example in all such cases, and given us commandment to follow His steps. When He was reviled He reviled not again; and when He suffered He threatened not; but committed Himself to Him that judgeth righteously. Not only is it bad policy to indulge vindictive retaliation, but it is essentially incompatible with the Christian calling, position and destiny.

> How rash, how inconsiderate is rage!
> How wretched! oh, how fatal is our error
> When to revenge precipitate we run!—
> Revenge, that still with double force recoils
> Back on itself, and is its own revenge,
> While to the short-lived, momentary joy
> Succeeds a train of woes, an age of torments.
> The fairest action of our human life
> Is scorning to revenge an injury;
> For who forgives without a further strife,
> His adversary's heart to him doth tie;
> And 'tis a firmer conquest, truly said,
> To win the heart than overthrow the head.

> Not Fortune's self,
> When she encounters virtue, but comes off
> Both lame and less. Why should a wise man, then,
> Confess himself the weaker by the feeling
> Of a fool's wrong?

2. Nay, we are not only to be forbearing under insults and wrongs, but we are to make it a point to return good for evil and blessing for cursing—*the exact reverse of retaliation.* The apostle does not mean that we are to esteem and regard the wicked as the good, or that we are to feel toward him who has injured us the same as toward our friends and benefactors. That would be at once unnatural, unreasonable, and unchristian. We must draw moral distinctions between the evil and the good. But Christianity requires that we cherish toward all men, and even toward the worst and most malicious, a sentiment of good-will and a real desire for their welfare. We may and must abhor their wickednesses and wrong-doing, but we must wish that they might be brought to a better mind, and be ready to serve and pray for them.

We are to do good to them that hate us, and to pray for those who despitefully use us. If our enemy hunger, we are to feed him; and if he thirst, we are to give him drink. We may pity, we may blame, we may even punish when the public good requires; but we are to do nothing against an offender at the instigation of malice; we are to have no pleasure in his sufferings; we are to feel no joy in his misfortunes; we are not to exclude him from our kind wishes and our benevolent consideration. He is still

a man, made in the image of God; and he may yet become a friend and an object worthy of our better regard; therefore we are to bless, and curse not. This is part of our Christian calling. There is a blessed recompense to be obtained by the diligent pursuit of it. No real disadvantage can ever come to us for doing it. And all that we may seem to lose by our forbearance for the time will be more than made up to us in the end.

3. And particularly are we not to be afraid of the threats and terrors of the wicked, nor to fear anything that man can do unto us, but always be ready to answer for the hope that is in us with meekness and in the fear of God. "The wicked flee when no man pursueth, but the righteous are bold as a lion."

> Stand but your ground, your ghostly foes will fly—
> Hell trembles at a heaven-directed eye.
> When you are challenged, you may dangers meet—
> True courage is a fixed, not sudden heat;
> Is always humble, lives in self-distrust,
> And will itself into no danger thrust.
> Trust in God will no base fears endure,
> And love to Christ shall make the conquest sure.

III. Consider this holy art in relation to society in general. Here also the text is quite specific. If any one desires to enjoy the full blessing of existence, and wishes to see good days, three things especially are to be observed.

1. "*Let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips from speaking guile.*"

It is remarkable how full and strong the Scriptures are respecting the tongue, and the sins and mischiefs

wrought by that little member. "Not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man; but that which cometh out of the mouth, this defileth a man." The tongue is the particular organ of the heart, and whatsoever is in a man is most likely to show itself there. And "if any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body. Behold, we put bits in the horses' mouths, that they may obey us, and we turn about their whole body. Behold also the ships, which, though they be so great, and are driven of fierce winds, yet are they turned about with a very small helm, whithersoever the governor listeth. Even so the tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things. Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth! And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell. For every kind of beasts, and of birds, and of serpents, and of things in the sea, is tamed, and hath been tamed of mankind; but the tongue can no man tame; it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison."

The gift of speech is a great and divine gift, but in the present depraved state of human nature it is a very dangerous gift, and one by which we are ever in the greatest danger of being betrayed into evil. Hence the great necessity of watchfulness over our words, that no corrupt communication proceed out of our mouths, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers. For if any man seem to be religious, and bridleth

not his tongue, he deceiveth his own heart, and his religion is nothing. "In the multitude of words there wanteth not sin; but he that refraineth his lips is wise." A profane, slanderous, impure, resentful, railing, lying tongue is particularly hateful to God, and productive of great and endless trouble. Nor is there so much as an idle word that men speak but they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. Therefore, if thou wilt have the joy of life and see good days, refrain thy tongue from evil, and thy lips that they speak no guile.

Oh, ask of Heaven to teach thy tongue
A true, a reverent tone;
Full oft attuned to praise and prayer,
And still to vice unknown.
And rather be it mute for aye
Than yield its music sweet
To malice, scorn, impurity,
To slander and deceit.

2. "*Let him eschew evil and do good.*" Evil deeds must be put away as well as evil words. Neither will a mere negative virtue answer us. There must be activity in positive well-doing. "He that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin." Whilst the heart and tongue and life are kept aloof from the contaminations of evil, they are not to continue blank and inactive, but to be occupied and diligent in what is virtuous and useful. An active beneficence is the necessary complement and crown of a thoroughly good and successful life. Men must do something, and do something that is profitable in the world. They must not only cease to do evil, but at the same time learn to do well.

> Man should dare all things that he knows is right,
> And fear to do no act save what is wrong.

3. "*Let him seek peace and ensue it.*" There is something beautiful and just in good Bishop Leighton's words where he says: "We may pursue peace among men, and not overtake it; we may use all good means, and fall short of it; but pursue it up as far as the throne of grace, seek it by prayer, and that will overtake it; that will be sure to find it in God's hand, who stilleth the waves of the sea and the tumults of the people. If He give quietness, who can give trouble?"

A great and precious blessing is peace. It is the source and soul of comfort to social life—

> The first of human blessings, and supreme,
> By whose wide tie the kindred sons of men
> Live brothers.

It is an object ever worthy of our pursuit. Therefore we are to hunt for it, and keep ourselves eagerly on its track, and never give up the chase till we secure it. This will lighten the ills of life and contribute mightily to make our earthly being blessed. This will add a beauty and a lustre to our days, and make them joyous in spite of all adversities. Peace is blessedness. When it comes to the soul,

> 'Tis heaven, all heaven, descending on the wings
> Of the glad legions of the King of kings;
> 'Tis more: 'tis God, diffused in every part—
> 'Tis God Himself triumphant in the heart.

And with this blessed art thus well understood and

diligently put to practice, what can deprive our days or lives of blessedness? Or who is he that can harm us? As Chrysostom once said of the empress, so may we say of every adversity that can befall us in the world: "If she determine to banish me, let her banish me; the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof. If she will cast me into the sea, let her cast me into the sea; I will remember Jonah. If she will thrust me into a burning fiery furnace, the three Hebrew children were there before me. If she will throw me to the wild beasts, I will remember that Daniel was in the den of lions. If she will condemn me to be stoned, I shall be the companion of the proto-martyr Stephen. If she will cut off my head, John the Baptizer submitted to the same punishment. If she will deprive me of my possessions, naked came I into the world, and I can afford to go naked out of it." And in all possible emergencies, whatever the evil may be, the Christian has his own undying consolations wrought in him, if not about him, by his unswerving obedience. The peace of God keeps his mind and heart through Jesus Christ. The art which the Holy Spirit teaches him works for him

> What nothing earthly gives or can destroy—
> The soul's calm sunshine and the heartfelt joy.

Sixth Sunday after Trinity.

ROM. 6 : 3–11 : Know ye not that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ, were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.

For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection: knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.

For he that is dead is freed from sin.

Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him: knowing that Christ, being raised from the dead, dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him.

For in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God.

Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.

WE here approach one of the most vital themes contained in the Scriptures. Christianity in its grandest facts and profoundest experiences, and grace in its sublimest mysteries and greatest achievements, are involved in these brief verses. But the subject is so deep and vast in its nature and relations that something of Luther's power of simplification and of Paul's clear intuitions are needed to set it forth so as to be easily understood and correctly apprehended. God help us to handle it so as to see and embrace the truth, and

be set forward in the comfort, life, and hopes of the blessed Gospel of our precious Lord and Saviour!

The apostle had just been discussing and determining the position, character, and work of the Saviour as the second Adam, and how the condition of all mankind is affected in both instances. He had given it as the true philosophy of man's estate that by the first Adam sin, death, condemnation, and the dominion of the curse were introduced into the world, and so descended to all of Adam born; that by the disobedience of one who stood at the head of the race judgment came upon all men to condemnation and death; that the dominion of corruption and guilt, with their sad consequences, is not the work of God, but the result of human transgression, begun in Adam's violation of the will and command of his Creator and Lord; and hence that, in the ordinary course of nature, there is no hope for man. But over against this he at the same time described another system of things, in which the grace of God has constituted another Adam—a second Head of the race—for the recovery of what was lost by the first, the conquering of sin and death, and the bringing of mankind to eternal life and blessedness. The presentation is that Christ the Son of God, having taken our common humanity upon Him, "was delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification;" that "when we were yet without strength Christ died for the ungodly;" that as the offence committed by Adam has brought judgment and condemnation upon all men, so by the righteousness of Christ there has come a free gift upon all

men to justification of life; that as through the first man's disobedience the many were made sinners, even so through the obedience of the individual second Adam the many are made righteous; and "that as sin reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord."

The showing thus was that universal humanity is connected now with two heads—with Adam, from whom it inherits sin and death, and with Christ, from whom it derives righteousness and eternal life; and that as it stands condemned in Adam, so it stands justified in Christ. Nor is the entail from these headships any more limited or constrained in the one case than in the other. As universal as sin is the satisfaction which Christ has rendered for it. Nay, as Christ is greater than Adam, "where sin abounded, grace did much more abound."

In the chapter of the text the apostle comes to consider the practical relations and effects of this doctrine. It would seem that some had quite misunderstood it, and made from it very unjust and ruinous inferences. At least he anticipated a false turn to it, involving fatal error. If the effect of Christ's work is coextensive with sin and death, and the race now stands justified in Him the same as it stood condemned in Adam, the thought might be, Where is the use of anything more? We are then safe in Him, and can now live and do as we please without further fear of condemnation. So some reasoned, or the apostle supposed they might reason, and he at once meets the nascent Antinomian heresy by inter-

posing his emphatic "God forbid! How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?" He accordingly proceeds in the words before us, with a good deal of warmth, to illustrate and establish the inherent impossibility of final salvation and eternal life on the part of those who continue in the old carnal life without radical spiritual change, renewal, and conformity to Christ's moral purity.

Luther correctly says that "Paul is here teaching Christians how to live on earth in good hope of a future eternal life, for which they are baptized and have become Christians." All is, indeed, exactly as he had before represented. It is pure Gospel doctrine that, objectively and forensically, a complete, everlasting, and universal justification for all men now exists in Jesus Christ. But this precious grace yet remains to be made living *in* men in order to bring them into experimental and practical realization of what Christ has in the eye of the law achieved by His death and resurrection. The victory of grace and righteousness in Him must be subjectively applied, as a sanctifying and renewing power in people's souls, in order that they may come to the eternal life begotten for them in Christ's mediatorial accomplishments.

That fallen man may come into the enjoyment of salvation and eternal glory something more than extrinsic justification is necessary—not, indeed, as to the meritorious and procuring cause of it, but as to the working of it into his nature, experiences, and life—not as part of his *title* to heaven, but as an essential part of his *qualification* for heaven.

Sin is an internal disease as well as an external condemnation. A man in the course of nature is in the situation of a convict sentenced to death and at the same time afflicted with some fatal bodily ailment. He is in double death—about to die the sentence of the law he has violated, and dying of the malady begotten of his sins. If exempted from his sentence, he must still die of his disease; and if relieved of his sickness, he must still die in expiation of his crimes. He must therefore be both pardoned and cured in order to live. And although Christ has won for all men a free justification from the sentence of the law, and a status of innocence and freedom in that respect the same as if they had never sinned at all, they may still perish and the world rot down from inherent corruptions. The justification of a sinner is not everything unto his salvation. It is one thing, and a transcendently great thing—a thing that lies at the base of everything else—but it is only in order to our sanctification. The diseased convict is pardoned that he may get well and live an approved and proper life as a good and virtuous citizen, to which his release from the clutches of the law is his greatest help and chief stimulation. Sanctification starts in justification, and ever depends upon it, and could not at all be without it; but it lies in the whole nature and intent of our justification, to set us on the path of life to God and holiness, that, on the basis of our justification, and in the power of it as wrought by Christ, we may develop a true, grateful, and ever-improving obedience and conformity to that blessed Saviour in whose

dear-bought righteousness alone we stand or can stand.

But justification itself needs to be individually appropriated to be of individual avail, even forensically. Though humanity as a whole now stands justified in and through Christ, that justification does not avail for any one individual's personal standing in the eye of the law until it is applied to him and he personally receives and takes it. An act of emancipation may be passed for ever freeing every slave in the country, and yet it does not free a single one who does not accept the governmental proclamation and will not avail himself of the privilege it gives. He must personally accept and apply it, and act under it, and enter upon the new life which it is meant to be to him, otherwise he practically remains the slave that he was, under the same old bonds and in no wise benefited by the exoneration which the government has provided and proclaimed in behalf of every bondman in the realm. Though the liberty is provided for all alike, and stands complete in the law, it is not liberty to him who does not accept and appropriate it, but remains only a dead letter. Every one may have the privilege to travel where he pleases, but if he never travels his privilege is a nothing to him. A man's debts may be all paid off by his friend, but if he does not believe them paid, and worries on in his anxiety to meet them, and never personally enters into the comfort and freedom of the truth that they are all discharged, he is practically no better off than he was before. And so the free gift which has come upon all men to justification

of life must be personally appropriated and made one's own, or it is all the same as if there had been no Christ, no provided salvation.

With a slight tinge of impatient feeling at the slowness of men to perceive the truth, the apostle here cites Baptism as the instrument by which the provisions of grace are personally applied: "Know ye not that so many of us as were baptized into Christ were baptized into His death? Therefore we are buried by baptism into death, that like as Christ was raised up by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life." He does not mean that some Christians were baptized and others not, but that, as everybody was initiated into Christianity by Baptism, so these sluggish or perverse-minded people ought to know from that alone the vital power of grace to renew and sanctify. Some have spoken as if he here referred to a particular mode of Baptism as the main point of consideration, and were arguing the moral sanctity going along with salvation from a supposed pictorial ceremony. Nothing could be farther from the truth or more unworthy of Paul and the subject itself. The apostle is not arguing realities from uncertain, accidental, and variable shadows, but is presenting the very realities themselves. Whatever may have been the apostolic mode of administering Baptism, whether by immersion, affusion, or both, the thing in mind is not the outward form of the ceremony, but the formation of a living union of the individual with Christ. Baptism implies a ceremonial application of water in the Name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, but

the apostle here ascribes to it a great spiritual efficacy, and cites it as a veritable insertion "into Christ," "into His death;" which must needs mean a bringing into fellowship with, and the realization of the power and benefits of, Christ's mediatorship wheresoever the true function of Baptism is fulfilled. The doctrine is, that right Baptism is not a mere ceremony or sign, but an instrument of grace, which, apart from any mere mode of the use of the water in it, and in spiritual reality, is the application of salvation to the soul by which the individual enters into the death and resurrection of Christ and into the effect and life dependent on Christ's mediatorial achievements. Whatever rationalists and sectarians may make of Baptism, this is what God has made it, according to Paul and all sound Christianity; and any other conception of it browbeats the text before us and every other scriptural text on the subject.

More commonly, the Scriptures speak of *faith* as the instrument whereby the benefits of Christ are applied and made availing to personal salvation. Hence we read, "The just shall live *by faith*" (Rom. 1 : 17; Gal. 3 : 11; Heb. 10 : 38); "Thou standest *by faith*" (2 Cor. 1 : 24); "Thy *faith* hath saved thee" (Luke 7 : 50); "By grace ye are saved *through faith*" (Eph. 2 : 8); "A man is justified *by faith*" (Gal. 2 · 16; Rom. 5 : 1). But faith is never a mere naked thing, an unembodied spirit. Wherever living faith is, it clothes and embodies itself in expressions toward God, in manifestations of consciousness of the divine approaches, presence, and grace, in calling upon and confessing the Lord Jesus, in letting go of

sin and the world to trust and follow the Redeemer on whom it fastens as its hope, and in the life-activities of the new man. This, however, is all summed up in the great initial sacrament of Christianity, and exists, at least in embryo, in every case in which Baptism is rightly received. Faith is confessed in Baptism, and the reception of Baptism belongs to and embodies the instruction and obedience of faith, without which it amounts to nothing. And it is only as Baptism is the embodiment of faith—of what it carries, offers, imparts, and seals on God's part, and apprehends, acknowledges, and receives on the part of the person baptized—that it is and becomes the instrument of the application of Christ's benefits. Where there is no faith, there is no effectual Baptism; and where faith is not embodied in Baptism, in all ordinary cases there is no salvation, for only "he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved" (Mark 16 : 16).

Baptism is therefore a true and most precious sacrament, framed for transcendent spiritual offices. It is the clothing of faith which takes hold on life. It is not only a saving ordinance, but it is the most saving of all ordinances, since it is the particular institute of Christ for spiritual insertion into Himself, into His death, and into the life and benefits flowing from His mediatorship. Being baptized, if the offices of Baptism be really fulfilled upon us, the title-deeds of forgiveness and effectual grace unto eternal life have been divinely signed, sealed, and delivered unto us, and we have therein entered upon to possess, enjoy, and ever more and more profit by the sublime

spiritual estate devised to us by the dying Jesus, whc yet lives to minister to us of His very life.

What, then, is the real estate of a Christian thus initiated and inserted into Christ and into His death? The apostle here explains it. It is such a oneness with our Saviour that His death really becomes the same to us as if we had experienced and endured all the pains and horrors of it in our own persons, and as if His resurrection to a new, glorious, and immortal life had really transpired in ourselves. So real is this that Paul says we died with Christ, and also arose with Him. And this he claims to be true in a double sense—first, in respect of our relation to the law, or *forensically;* and second, in respect of our conformity to Christ's death and resurrection in the sphere of personal experience and life, or *spiritually;* that is to say, as to our justification and also as to our sanctification.

When Christ went to His execution, though in Himself pure as heaven, He went invested with a body of sin, even that of all the sins of all sinners; for He had assumed humanity and all the infirmities and guilt of humanity in its relation to God's good and holy law. This was the peculiar bitterness of the cup which came to Him in Gethsemane, and what occasioned those unfathomable agonies which marked His death. With this vast body of sin incorporated with His sinless being as a new Head of the race, the law said, "Die He, or justice must," and launched upon Him the whole curse due to an entire race of transgressors, equal to the execution of eternal death upon every member of that race.

It was the entire hell due to guilty man emptied upon His sinless self. But emptied, indeed, it now was, in so far as the law had any further satisfactions to exact for human sin. The whole curse was absorbed, expended, exhausted, gone. It carried Christ down into the grave, but it died with Him, and was for ever buried in His sepulchre. The debt was paid, and there could be no further demand.

But it was not possible that He who is the effulgence of the Father's glory and the very image of His substance should be holden of death. He could exhaust the penalty by dying the death of the curse, and yet live beyond it; for by the glory of the Father He had power to lay down His life, and power to take it again. Therefore He resumed the life He had given as a propitiation for the sins of the whole world. "He rose from the dead." But the life resumed was now a justified life—justified in respect of that by which He was made accursed in His death—for the curse had been fully met and could no longer hold. And this new life, being a justified life, was a life of immortal glory, such as belongs to one who has fulfilled the law—a life of freedom and right to all the immunities of the eternal kingdom.

In so far, then, as we are baptized into Christ and into His death as the new Head of the race, or have living faith, all that He thus did and achieved is in law exactly the same to us as if we in our own persons had met, satisfied, and extinguished the whole curse due to our sins, and were now alive again from it in a life over which death and hell have no more power, and beyond all reach of further condemnation

and disability for all the endless remainder of our existence. Original and actual sin in the past, and sins of infirmity and weakness and all that can at all condemn in the whole continuity of the believer's existence, are thus covered, atoned for, cancelled, and gone beyond all capacity to come against him any more. This is justification, our forensic exoneration from all condemnation by our personal Baptism into Christ and His glorious mediatorship.

But our insertion into Christ, His death and resurrection, is much more than this. With our absolved and justified standing under the law there necessarily goes the setting of us on the path of moral sanctity and spiritual consecration, experience, and life, both the pattern and source of which are in the death and resurrection of our Lord. Gradually it may be, and very imperfect as compared with God's holy law, but of necessity and out of the moral force of our free and complete exoneration from all condemnation of the law, there is a quickening and rising up to spiritual things, and a conforming of personal moral character to Christ's Spirit, which repeats in us something of the same history He enacted for us. As He died to sin in dying for sin, and thus ceased from sin so as to have it no longer on Him, so by Baptism into His death we die to sin; the old man is crucified, and the body of sin in which we once lived is laid off, buried in the grave, gone everlastingly. If this does not happen, albeit that it is the work of time and never perfectly consummated in this life, it is because we have not been effectively inserted into Christ's death, and our Baptism has not

come to be a living reality to us; for, having died to sin in Christ's death, how shall we any longer live therein? So, again, as the dead Christ was requickened by the glory of the Father, and raised up from the dead in a new, holy, and heavenly life, our incorporation with Him likewise implies and necessitates a spiritual resurrection on our part—a quickening and rising up from moral deadness to "walk in newness of life"—as free from the service and power of sin as from its curse and penalty. When a man is dead, life has ceased, and life in that which was is no more; and if there is any life beyond that death, it must be new life quite separated from that which was lived in what caused the dying; otherwise we are not dead to that in which the curse holds and inheres, and we are not really participant in the deliverance from the curse.

Sanctification and cure from the disease of sin are thus vitally connected with justification and release from the penalty of sin—not in any degree or manner as the procuring cause of the latter, but as the outflowing life of it. Nay, the whole process and intent of deliverance from the condemnation of sin is that we may be delivered from its power, and it fails where it does not bring life unto God in practical righteousness along with forensic absolution. If the Gospel does not serve to change and renew men's hearts, to separate them from the service of their depravities and carnal lusts, and to set them upon a new life of earnest and perpetual pursuit of holiness, and erect an effectual barrier between life to self and sin and life in Christ, neither has it brought them

into personal connection with Christ's saving benefits. Baptism itself is emptiness without faith. It is not possible to please God or have His favor if we have not faith. But "faith is a living, active, efficacious, and powerful principle, and must incessantly do that which is good. It never asks shall it do good works, but does them before the question comes, and is always doing them. He who is not active in good works has no faith, and only gropes and babbles without knowing either faith or good works; for it is no more possible to separate good works from faith than to separate heat and light from fire" (Luther). We do not get salvation for our good works or our attainments in sanctification, but full absolution for Christ's sake is offered, given, and imparted to our faith that we may do nothing but good works and go on for ever "perfecting holiness in the fear of the Lord." And if our faith confessed and expressed in Baptism has not the virtue to produce in us a daily drowning and crucifying of the old man, that the body of sin may die out of us, neither has it the virtue to insert us into justification through His blood. The one must needs flow from the other as surely as a seed grows or a living tree puts forth unto fruitfulness.

There be some religionists who are very troubled about the preaching of the free grace of God and the complete and everlasting justification of every one that believeth. They have an idea that it gives license to sin and tends to make people indifferent as to how they live. Some go so far as to say that he who accepts the doctrine of justification by faith only

is thereby prepared, at least in theory, to plunge into the lowest depths of depravity. But they slander the most essential doctrine of the Holy Scriptures, and make a most dangerous, if not fatal, mistake as to what the Gospel of the grace of God is. It is this lie against which the apostle breaks out in boiling indignation. Nay, he here lays it down as the thing most necessary to be understood and unreservedly accepted in order to come to the sanctification which it is thought to disable and defeat; yea, as the most potent thing to create life to God in all holy conversation and godliness. He claims the preaching of a free, perfect, and everlasting exoneration from all condemnatory exactions of the law through the mediatorial work of Christ alone, the instant it is seen and accepted by faith, to be the mightiest impulse to a full and genuine consecration to all the elements of a saintly life. He himself gloried in it above all things as that which effectually crucified the world unto him, and him unto the world; and he here gives it as the very thing to bring us to practical sanctification. The word is, that as Christ once for all died unto sin, and thence arose to perpetual life to God, "so reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ." Not from mere good feelings we may have; not from any happy frame of spirit coming as a refreshment from the divine presence, such as may now and then find place in the sphere of our Christian experiences; not from the self-flattering consciousness of a spirit habitually exercised in devotions and external works of godliness,

—not from any or all of these, or anything of the kind, are we to get and infer our practical mastery of sin, but we are to *reckon* in the soberness of simple faith that *as Christ is, so we are*, dead to sin and alive to righteousness in Him, and alone through what He has done and achieved for us. It is thus, above all, that we come to realize how truly and solemnly we are invested with a sacred stewardship and commission for the subjugation and control of our earthly members, and for the bringing of all our being into conformity to Him whose we are and who hath bought us with His own blood. It is thus that we come to feel that there devolves upon us a weight of practical responsibility measured only by the greatness of the work and the sublimity of the deliverance our Redeemer has wrought for us, binding up every power of soul and body to the grateful, joyous, and everlasting service of Him who has done for us such unspeakable things.

Ah, yes, dear friends, the apostle well knew the wide difference there is between a legalistic and an evangelical obedience, and how utterly disheartening to the soul, if not delusively self-flattered, is the task of maintaining itself in a righteousness on which to hope that God is gracious to it. Heaven knows what scandals in the way of penances, decreed indulgences, saintly intercessions, and inventions of purgatorial fires, have found place to persuade into something of confidence and hope in such a line of things! But for that buoyant elasticity of obedience which makes all duty sweet, all suffering easy, all service light, and renders all heavenly anticipations

radiant, we must have the pure, full-toned, and rotund Gospel of free grace, stript of all let or hindrance—even that which gives to the embrace of faith a righteousness of Jesus which has done away with all condemnation, covers all defects that still attend our most devoted efforts, and puts into our possession now and at once a clear title to all the liberties of the kingdom of heaven. Let it only be seen, known, and in truth believed, as the Scriptures everywhere teach, that now in very fact, through the all-sufficient mediatorship of Christ, all the guilt of our past ungodliness is done away, the ransom for every iniquity paid, all the penalties of the law we have so often broken discharged by the pains of our Saviour's awful death in our stead; that the very Son of God, without our seeking, thinking, or knowing, out of His own overflowing love, laid Himself across the mouth of the flaming hell due to our sins, and completely bridged it over with His own spotless righteousness to give us free access into the open gates of heaven; that, having been ransomed by His blood, and having received power to become the sons of God through simply believing on His name, we are now consecrated and set apart as a peculiar people whose grand commission and sole business is to show forth the praises of Him who hath called us out of darkness into His marvellous light,—and there comes with it such an inspiration of gladness, such a thrill of grateful joy, and such a troop of moral considerations to move, bind, and consecrate the soul to Him who so loves it and has washed it in His own blood, that the universe has not another moral power so effective to

melt subdue, persuade, regenerate, electrify, and control the man and to fill him with all the Godward affections of a living saintship. This confirms hope, inflames with heavenly zeal, takes command of the being, and sets the whole nature in motion in a new orbit to the sway of a new centre of gravitation. Nor is it within the power of man to triumph over death and sin, to enter into the joys of redemption, to breathe with freedom in the atmosphere of spiritual life, until he comes to see himself buried in the death and alive in the resurrection of Jesus. Neither can we ever walk in the confidence of peace until we behold our salvation complete in our Saviour's merits, and ourselves surely delivered and safe in the blessed mediatorship of our once-crucified but now living and glorified Redeemer.

Dear friends, to this glorious Gospel of the blessed God do I therefore commend you. With all its holy mysteries and seeming paradoxes bind it to your hearts as the sublimest joy of your being, for it is nothing less than "the wisdom of God and the power of God unto salvation, to every one that believeth." I do not know your hearts; I cannot enter there. God only knows what secret burdens of guilt may be resting on your consciences; He only is privy to all the stains which your souls have upon them, embittering your recollections and harassing your peace. But this I know: that it has been given me to preach to you to-day a complete remedy for every such trouble. Believe that Christ has borne the penalty for all your crimes. Believe that He has extracted and destroyed the deadly sting of death and con-

demnation as you accept and trust in His blessed mediation. Believe that your prison-doors are open now, and that an everlasting freedom is yours if you will but take it, giving to Him your hearts and grateful devotion. Believe it, and see your condemnation gone with His death, and rise up with Him from the grave of your ill life to clasp His loving and helping hand, and henceforth walk with Him in the joy of an assured heavenly sonship. Believe it, and cast from you all fear of death or judgment as you plant yourselves together with Him to rise and grow with Him in the same justified and eternal life. Do not dim the glory of His mediation nor the heavenliness of your privilege by any further doubt or unbelief, but believe, enter into the substance and meaning of your Baptism, let go the old life with the old condemnation, and take the new life of free justification, that you may live no more to sin, but to Him who died to redeem us from all iniquity and lives to bring us to His everlasting glory.

Seventh Sunday after Trinity.

Rom. 6 : 19–23 : I speak after the manner of men, because of the infirmity of your flesh : for as ye have yielded your members servants to uncleanness and to iniquity, unto iniquity ; even so now yield your members servants to righteousness, unto holiness.

For when ye were the servants of sin, ye were free from righteousness.

What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed ? for the end of those things is death.

But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life.

For the wages of sin is death : but the gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

THE misery that was, the freedom that is, and the life that shall be, in the case of those who have come to a living faith in Christ is the subject which the great apostle brings before us in the Epistle Lesson for this day.

I. Reference is here made to *the misery that was.* It was a common thing for Paul to remind Christians to whom he wrote what they were in the days of their ignorance, impenitence, and unbelief. Thus he recalls to Titus what he and others once were : " For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another " (Tit. 3 : 3). So he wrote to the Christians at

Ephesus: "You hath He quickened, who were dead in trespasses and in sins, wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that worketh in the children of disobedience; among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others" (Eph. 2 : 1–6). And so he speaks to these Christians at Rome as having been "the servants of sin," "free from righteousness," yielding their members "to uncleanness, and to iniquity unto iniquity," and doing those things of which they had now become ashamed.

It is also of great practical importance that these facts in the past history of God's children should not be lost sight of. Christians themselves need to remember the pit whence they were digged, and people in general need to have the matter before them, lest, as they feel themselves to be great sinners, they should quite despair of ever reaching that high and sublime estate which the Scriptures assign to genuine Christians.

The sacred writers do certainly hold out a very high ideal to be realized by a thorough practical Christianity, and one which we should never think of lessening or modifying in the least, however far below it we may fall. But there is danger of dwelling too exclusively on that ideal. It may induce despair of ever becoming genuine Christians. Complete saintship embraces such excellences of character, such virtues, such purity, such holiness, such

heavenliness of temper and life, that it would seem as if it could not breathe except sacred air or walk except on consecrated ground. And when we think of a Christian's divine relations and celestial citizenship; of how the angels minister to him with loving interest; of the tender sympathy which goes forth from the heart of Jesus in heaven toward him; of the unction of the eternal Spirit of God that is upon him; of the supernal life and immortal kinghood and priesthood to which he is ordained; of the influence and fellowship which he has with Heaven,—we begin to be afraid, and we shrink from him as if he were a being from some other sphere, and turn away as if there were nothing in common between him and us. But when we know that he is flesh and bones and blood like ourselves, born with the same corrupt humanity which we wear, once as deep in ignorance, depravity, earthiness, and sin as ever we have been, and that there are no hindrances to our becoming saints which he has not felt and had to wrestle with the same as ourselves, the whole matter takes on a different complexion, and his case becomes one to enlist, attract, encourage, persuade, and give us hope.

It is well, therefore, to have it put before us that all saints were once sinners, and that, to whatever they have risen or may rise, they have every one come up out of the same slough of depravity and wickedness belonging to unsanctified humanity in general. The truth is, that Christ came not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance, and that it is for just such poor, blind, and duped slaves of the

devil that the great redemption of the Gospel has been provided.

But in thus referring to the state in which the Gospel first found these people the apostle insists that the old service of sin was a very unprofitable service. They may have thought it all right at the time, but he appeals to them to know what fruit or profit they had in it. Did it make them any the happier? No. Did it make them more honorable and dignified? No. Did it make the burdens and trials of life any lighter or enable them to bear them better? No. Did it satisfy their souls, exalt their self-respect, or make them feel as if they were true and proper men? No. What fruit, then, had they in those things of which they had now become ashamed? Paul could think of none, and neither could they. A life of sin is the most senseless sort of life. There is no reason in it. It is a dementation, a craze, a giddy emptiness, which cannot point to a single advantage to be gained by it. Even apart from all reference to a future retribution, and looked at in the light of calculations for this world alone, what gain is there in ungodliness? What does a man make by never praying, never thinking of God and eternity? What is he advantaged by not believing in the Scriptures, by despising religion, and by holding all sacred things in contempt? And when it comes to sensuality, revelling, the giving of a loose to lust and passion, and a living only to pamper carnal appetite and desire, where is the profit of it? What good does one get from it? There may be momentary gratification and pleasure, but we have

only to follow the man a little way to see weakening, lassitude, and premature decay. Presently his pleasures pall; his capacity to enjoy them disappears with his inordinate indulgences; his credit, friends, and fortune leave him; his joints become full of pains and his bones of rottenness; his self-respect wilts away, and his soul is tortured with the clamors of a guilty conscience. The forbidden sweets he set himself to gather turn out to be the stings of adders and the poison of asps. And when he comes to reap his harvest, his grapes are grapes of gall, and all that he has sown to the flesh yields him only corruption.

Such is sin and the wages of it, even in this present world. It can bring shame, regret, and misery, but there is no possible advantage in it—no profit. Ye that have followed it all your days, what gain can you show from any and all the sins and mean things that you have ever done?

But sin and a life severed from the service of God is worse than profitless. The apostle insists further that it earns death. Its wages is death. "The end of those things" which mark the unsanctified "is death." It is the inevitable and eternal law of moral natures: "In the day thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die." What are graves but records and results of sin? Every coffin, every gravestone, every sod patted upon the little hillock beneath which some loved form reposes, every flower planted there by sorrowing friendship's hand, is a sermon on the text, "The wages of sin is death." And every being that ever sinned thereby signed and sealed an irrevocable

death-warrant for itself. Destruction is always self-wrought, and sin is the fatal art which inevitably produces it.

An angel, high and glorious, basked and blazed in the light of God, rising nearer and ever nearer to the glory unapproachable. In an ill hour for him he thought to seize upon it by his own self-will. But he missed his mark, as all sin must miss, and fell, self-ruined, disabled, dead to all the glories which once were his.

Two exalted creatures—both holy, both happy, both free, framed in their Maker's image—walked at large in a garden of love and blessedness all their own. They listened to a deceiver's lies; they trusted to a deceiver's word; they ate what God had forbidden. And they died to Paradise, died to innocence, died to peace, and went down to graves that must have been unblessed for ever had not a second Adam interposed in their behalf.

Thus it is that sin brings death, and a measure of death, too, which is not bounded by the grave. Sin kills beyond the tomb. If there were no hereafter, the sepulchre might close up the account; but there is an immortality of dying as well as living, and sin puts the transgressor under that eternal death. A spirit can never cease to exist; and if sin be upon it it cannot cease to die, any more than it can stop its everlasting continuity. And all this horribleness pertains to that state to which men are born, and from which there is no possible escape for any living soul save by that deliverance which it is the high fortune of the true Christian to enjoy.

So much, then, for the misery where grace has not yet wrought its hallowing change.

II. Let us look next at *the freedom which is* where the Gospel has its intended effect.

I have said that a Christian is a man from the common rank of sinners, a partaker by common inheritance of a diseased, condemned, and dying humanity. Whatever difference there may be between him and men unsanctified, he is still a man, with all the weaknesses, wants, feelings, and infirmities of a man. He is not an angel, not a god, but still flesh and blood, under all the ordinary conditions of mortal life and its vicissitudes, not excepting constant shortcomings, and even sin itself. Though absolved and set upon a new path of effort and experience, and walking in the light and strength of many and great supernatural helps, he is still under daily need of asking for mercy. Coming to the sanctuary of worship or to the sacrament of communion with his Redeemer, he must still make confession of sin, and cannot hope to be accepted or to stand except as the Lord is gracious and does not hold him to strict account for his failures, defects, and personal unworthiness. But, still, he is very different in character and estate from what he was before he became a Christian.

First of all, he is a forgiven man. However great or many his sins of the past, and however infirm, frail, and full of shortcomings he may still be, his record on the books of God is clear. Not one of all his offences or defects is remembered against him. They are all blotted out, completely covered and

quite buried in everlasting oblivion, the same as if they never had been. It is hard even for believers to believe this and to take to themselves the full comfort of it; but it is true—true as the words of God, true as the merit and blood-shedding of Jesus Christ. So it is written: "Thou hast forgiven the iniquity of Thy people, Thou hast covered all their sin. Thou hast taken away all Thy wrath: Thou hast turned Thyself from the fierceness of Thine anger" (Ps. 85 : 2, 3). And again: "I, even I, am He that blotteth out thy transgressions for Mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins" (Isa. 43 : 25); "I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and as a cloud thy sins" (Isa. 44 : 22). And again: "You, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath He reconciled" (Col. 1 : 21); "You, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath He quickened together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses, blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us" (Col. 2 : 13, 14). And yet once more: "I write unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you" (1 John 2 : 12). As surely, then, as God is true, a true Christian is a thoroughly forgiven man. The law, however broken, has nothing more to bring against him. From all condemnation he is absolved and free.

In the next place, he is a changed man. Wicked and godless once, thinking little and caring less about his soul, eternity, or the will and pleasure of his Maker, he has been brought to consideration, made sensible of his past folly and ingratitude, and turned

about to a new course of life. His old careless and prayerless ways he has forsaken, and set out upon the path of devout obedience to the good Lord who has done so much for him. Not only has he laid aside some of his bad habits, broken off from certain ill things, outwardly reformed from the scandals in which he previously lived, but his heart is changed, and his whole being moves and acts under new impulses, with new aims as a completely renewed man. He is now ashamed of those things in which he once delighted, and has repented out of all his old sins. He may be weak. He may make many mistakes. Like a babe just learning to walk, his gait may be tottering and his falls many. But he is nevertheless set on a new style of life from that which formerly characterized him. He is not perfect—and never will be so long as he is in the flesh and connected with this world—but the inmost aim and prayer of his soul is that he may keep and obey the statutes of God. He prays now. He loves God's Word and worship now. He has renounced the devil and the works of darkness, taken Christ for his Commander and Guide, and is particular to speak, follow, and live the truth as a man who hopes to live for ever in a heaven of purity and righteousness. He has "put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts," and is so far renewed in the spirit of his mind that he has "put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness." Baptized into Jesus Christ, the whole body of his old sins is laid aside, given up to destruction, renounced

as the greatest foe to his peace, and a sacred consecration is on him to "walk in newness of life." Having formerly yielded his members servants to uncleanness and to iniquity unto iniquity, so he now yields them servants of righteousness unto holiness. In a word, he is a changed man, regenerated unto God, quickened and made alive unto sanctification and holy living.

I cannot say, dear friends, that all who profess and call themselves Christians answer to this portrait. I fear, rather, that many members of our churches have very little experimental acquaintance with the description. But this I do know: that any one who lives on in wilful and known sin is not yet a forgiven man; that no one can ever enter the kingdom of heaven who is not "born again of water and of the Spirit;" and that no one has any right to the Christian name who is not a changed man—changed from the old carnal, sinful, careless, and prayerless life to one of earnest devotion, purity, and righteousness; for no servant of sin is an accepted servant of God.

Moreover, a Christian man is a spiritually comforted man,—comforted not only against the threatenings and penalties of a broken law and from the shame and self-accusation of the wickedness in which he once lived, but he is in every way inwardly fortified against all the ills, infirmities, vicissitudes, and sorrows of this present world. He has the Holy Spirit in him, and that Spirit is his perpetual Comforter, helping his infirmities, assisting his prayers, leading him into right appreciation of the truth, bringing to his remembrance what God hath said as

need requires, showing him things to come, and ministering to him a peace and joy which the world can neither give nor take away.

Christianity does not make men stoics, neither does it exempt them from any of the common trials of life. They have feelings like other people. They can be hurt and rasped and torn and disturbed with hardship and bereavement. Anxieties and poverty and sickness and death assail them the same as other classes. And they often have special griefs and sorrows because of their being Christians. But in it all the Lord does not leave them comfortless. They have bread to eat which others know not of. They carry well-springs in their souls, fed from the reservoirs of heaven, from which they can drink when all other fountains fail. Through the assurances and promises of God their hearts are stayed when others are dismayed or utterly confounded. Yea, though they walk through the valley of the shadow of death, they fear no evil; for they know that their Lord is with them, and His rod and His staff comfort them.

It is not by their earnings, merit, and wisdom that all this is the present possession of Christians. Paul is particular to say that it is "the gift of God." The forgiveness, the renovation, the comfort which the Christian enjoys are all donated by the merciful Father in heaven. Innocence once gone, there is no more power of self-recovery in man. If he is ever restored, it must be by grace only. If it so be that we have been forgiven, quickened, raised up, made to sit in heavenly places, refreshed with heavenly consolations, it is all because of the riches of Jehovah's

mercy and His great love wherewith He loved us. "For by grace are ye saved through faith, and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God" (Eph. 2 : 8).

And this gift is "through Jesus Christ." Not without Him could it be and God maintain His holiness. There was need for the eternal Son of God to stoop from heaven, to become incarnate, to be cradled in a manger, to suffer hunger and privation, to pour out His heart's blood on the cross, to die the accursed death, to have the pains of hell emptied upon His innocent soul, and to overcome the powers of darkness by descent into their own territory, in order to render it possible for this gift to come to us. But, having gone through the whole length and breadth of all this work of wonder, and taken His place at the right hand of the Father as our Lord, it is now the privilege of fallen men to be free from sin, both as to its penalty and its power, and to be filled with all consolation in Christ Jesus.

This, therefore, is the freedom which now is.

III. Notice, then, *the life that shall be*, or what is to come of these Christian experiences. The sacred prophet said, "When the wicked man turneth away from his wickedness, and doeth that which is lawful and right, he shall save his soul *alive*;" "As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his evil way and *live*." And so Paul repeats to these Christians at Rome that, having yielded to the calls of righteousness, being made free from sin, and having become servants to God, their fruit was unto holiness, and the end everlasting *life*; for whilst the

wages of sin is death, the "gift of God is *eternal life* through Jesus Christ our Lord."

It would be hard to say just what "eternal life" is. The divine expression has heights and depths and lengths and breadths of meaning which baffle all powers of human conception, much more all powers of human description. We cannot tell it all. But it is the opposite of the state and consequences of sin. Wherein a life of sin is death, this is a life of life. It is the soul freed from condemnation, made alive to God and goodness, repossessed of its powers of enjoyment, and standing before God, blessed with the activities of its right being, and happy in the favor and benediction of the Almighty. A condemned and imprisoned man has no good of life. A sick and dying man has no good of life. A man enslaved to the base will of another has no good of life. A dead man has no good of life. But Christianity sets believers free, recovers them from all ignoble and disabling captivity and enslavement, awakens and instates them in the true enjoyment of being, helps and heals them from their infirmities, and invests them with all the habiliments and happiness of right life. They *live* as no servant of sin can live.

And this life is expansive, growing and ever-augmenting. Made alive in Christ Jesus, the Christian is embarked upon a sea of everlasting progress. He is alive in all the highest elements of being, and started on a series of developments without limit and without end. As the eagle leaves some filthy crag of earth, and rises and soars in circles over circles

until lost to sight in the brightness of the heavens, so the ransomed soul, however low and obscure the estate from which the commencement is made, is destined to ascend through sphere upon sphere, strengthening with every new turn for still higher and higher ascensions in blessedness and glory, till laboring thought can no more follow him, and even inspired intellect is compelled to give over and say, "It doth not yet appear what we shall be." Unknown and inexhaustible eternity alone can reveal the cycles of untried being and bliss which the Christian is to traverse. And this immortality of moral and intellectual growth and Godward expansion, with all the heavenly associations, powers, offices, and sublime scenes of being which it necessarily includes, is what the Scriptures call "*eternal life.*"

Of course it is not a thing which man can earn, merit, or attain by his own will, efforts, prayers, penances, and good works. A man in trespasses and in sins is dead, and a dead man cannot raise himself to life. As we could not create ourselves to natural life, so neither can we create ourselves to eternal life. It is "the gift of God" in both instances. It comes to us "through Jesus Christ." It is offered, given, and freely bestowed for His sake. And as we accept His word, take Him for our Lord, and set ourselves to obey and follow Him, His life is infused into us and made our life also; so that we live in Him and share His estate and glory. Because He lives, we live also, and live in those same things and for that same eternal exaltation in which He lives.

Having received the Spirit of adoption by which we become sons of God, we become heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ, so that as our old sinful being dies with His death, we rise with Him to a newness of being destined to participate also in all His glorification. Eternal life is the Christ life, resurrection life, immortal life. It is life in Christ, and for Christ, and with Christ. And this is that life which is to be, and is now already begun in all those who through grace have passed from death unto life.

And this life God wishes that we should have. For this purpose He has instituted His Gospel, and caused it to be preached unto us, and made it our privilege to learn its truths. Nay, the world stands and all the providences which shape its affairs are ordered that we, and others like us, may be turned from the death of sin and have everlasting life. And shall we not rejoice and be glad in our high calling? Shame on the souls who have such opportunities, but do not embrace and improve them!

Eighth Sunday after Trinity.

ROM. 8 : 12–17 : Therefore, brethren, we are debtors not to the flesh, to live after the flesh.

For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die : but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.

For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.

For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear ; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.

The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God : and if children, then heirs : heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together.

ONDERFUL are the Christian's privileges and dignities as rehearsed in these words. Inexhaustible fields of contemplation are here opened up. To discuss them in one brief discourse is impossible. The mere enumeration of some of the grand particulars is all that I will at present attempt. May the Spirit of God assist us in our meditations that they may be to our profit!

I. The first thing I find here set down as belonging to the peculiar privileges and dignities of true Christians is *that they are free from oppressive and soul-destroying debt.* Every debtor is held under certain bonds and obligations to his creditor, and is not a free man till those obligations have been met;

and so, in the course of nature, men are bound and enslaved to the flesh—to that order of things which holds in a mere carnal life. In the eating of the forbidden fruit there was a surrender of the higher nature to the lower, the giving of sense the dominion over the conscience and the soul. From being spiritual man thus became carnal, sold under sin, made a bond-slave of the flesh, and without power of ever redeeming himself from the untoward situation. Enslaved to the flesh, he could only do the will of the flesh; and that will being always at war with the divine will, his slavery to the flesh was a slavery to sin and to the estate and destiny which necessarily goes along with sin. To live after the flesh is to give place to what works death, temporal, spiritual, and eternal. Hence to be bound up in a condition in which the flesh or the carnalized mind holds and levies upon us as a creditor on a debtor is a very ill and hopeless bondage. But from this the Christian is released and free—not free, indeed, from the wants and necessities of a corporeal and natural life, but free in such sense as to be no longer bound to fulfil the lusts and dictates of a fallen and perverted nature, and no longer dependent upon what the flesh can do toward working out a justifying righteousness.

So in the beginning of the chapter Paul says, "The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death." There is here the double idea—that of a release from all claims of the law for the sins and defections of the flesh, and also of a release from the bondage of continuance in those sins. In both these respects the

unsanctified man is debtor to the flesh and bound over to death. He has the crimes of his carnal life to answer for, and he has the disease on him which must inevitably kill him. But in both the true Christian is liberated. He is no longer in debt for his sins, nor for a righteousness of his own in order to maintain his standing before the law. Neither is he any longer so held by the flesh as not to be able to disobey it. The forgiveness and justification which he has through faith in Christ's mediation have brought also a divine power, by which he is able now to rise up from his swine-serving, to renounce the sway of his old carnal ways, to break through the bondage in which he was so hopelessly held, and to go back to the Father-home, weakened and damaged indeed, but free now from the old task-master and oppressor. Once he could not do a good deed or think a good thought. Everything of him was tainted, enslaved, hopelessly held, dragged, and commanded by the law of sin and death; but by the grace of God he is now enfranchised. The death-ward gravitation is broken. He has come to his better self, knows now of a better life, moves now in obedience to better impulses and better aims, and from obeying now sets to mortifying and destroying the will and lusts of his carnal nature.

He is still in the flesh, in contact with its solicitations and urgencies, and in some things cannot shake off its demands; but he is no longer so obligated to it as to be compelled to live after the flesh and to endure the consequences of a mere fleshly life. The world may still lay down its claims as conditions of

its favor or as prices for its goods, but he is under no constraint of compliance with them. If he cannot have them on God's terms, he can do without them, and suffer no loss from their absence. He is under no obligations to them. His blessedness is secure in spite of all privation or inconvenience that may go along with a total renunciation and disregard of all that the world, the flesh, or the devil have to offer. And through the expectations of a near and glorious resurrection to the life to come this world and all that it can give is so depreciated, disabled, crucified, and already dead to him that he is but little concerned whether it smiles or frowns. He is above its power to command him. He is no longer a debtor to the flesh to live after the flesh. He owes it nothing. He is independent of its claims. He turns a deaf ear to its imperious requirements. He has got beyond its demands. He is free; by the Son of God made free, and therefore free indeed.

II. In the next place, I find it here set down among the peculiar privileges and dignities of true Christians that *they are the children of God.*

There are different kinds of sons of God. There is an only-begotten Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, who is God of God and Light of light. In this sense no other being is the son of God. There is also a sense in which all creatures are God's children. They are His workmanship. He gave them their being. They have all sprung from His creative power and wisdom. This is true alike of the good and bad, the high and low, the rational and the irrational, angels, men, and brutes. So, again, all those crea

tures who enjoy God's favor are called God's sons. Such are the good angels who have never fallen, and such are all creatures who stand approved before Him as moral and intellectual beings. This sonship is common to all celestial existences and to justified men. But Christians are the children of God in still another sense peculiar to themselves—namely, by spiritual adoption and regeneration.

It is the intention and office of the Gospel to transform the heart, life, and condition of those who receive it. When men come to true faith in Christ they are actually taken up from a state of alienation into a state of tender and loving acceptance with God, joined to Him, made a part of His sacred family. They are transferred from the household and synagogue of Satan to His household, and made His sons and daughters. As when a man takes a stranger or alien into his family, confers upon him the privileges of a son, and endows him with the rights of inheritance the same as his own naturally-born child, so, by the Gospel, God, out of His infinite goodness, takes up the slaves of sin and condemnation and places, endows, and treats them as members of His own family, and does for them as a true Father. This is called *adoption*. The Roman laws, as well as our own, made special provisions for such cases, binding both the adopter and the adopted the same as parent and child. It was, in effect, the making of a true child and heir of one who was not the man's natural child and heir. And in this sense especially are Christians the children of God. They are not such by birth, but they become

such by grace. Hence it is written, "When the fulness of the time was come God sent forth His Son to redeem them that were under the law, *that we might receive the adoption of sons*" (Gal. 4 : 4, 5).

This adoption, by which sinful men are made God's children, is both a legal and a moral thing. It is partly external and partly internal, and includes their regeneration and their justification. A man is not a child of God while he has upon him all his old sins unforgiven; neither is he a child of God if the divine Word has not affected and changed his heart. An adopted child of God is therefore one who has found forgiveness, and is at the same time inwardly awakened and made alive to sacred things, and set to love and serve God as his gracious Father. Christians not only have the name of children, but they have the hearts of children, speak the language of children, render the obedience of children, realize the dependence of children, and feel the confidence of children, as well as anticipate the inheritance of children. They not only call God Father, but they are made like Him, show His lineaments, and by the regenerating influences of the Holy Ghost are renewed in His image. In a word, they are God's true children, partakers of the divine nature and bearers of the divine likeness as well as the divine name.

III. Still further, I find it here set down among the peculiar privileges and dignities of true Christians that they *have a personal and unmistakable assurance of their holy childship.* They are adopted, and they have the Spirit of adoption; and that Spirit witnesses with their spirit that they are God's children.

The first influence of the Spirit upon the soul is the making of it feel its sinfulness and condemnation. In this stage of its operations it is a spirit of bondage to fear. It is what we sometimes call *conviction*—the making of a man sensible that he is a sinner before God, and that nothing but eternal death can result if not in some way completely released from his sins. It is a state of spiritual alarm, terror, distress, and despair of salvation by one's own goodness, worth, or works. It is a condition in which the soul is aroused to see that hell is its deserved, just, and impending portion, from which it has no strength to escape. It is therefore the Spirit as a spirit of bondage to fear. Many never get beyond this. They have been made to know and feel that they are sinners, and are troubled whenever they think of it. But such have not yet come to the liberty and consolations of true Christians. Even many professed believers have never come farther than dimly and very doubtfully to hope that they are saved, being painfully uncertain whether they are the children of God or not. Where a legalistic style of piety obtains, this is about as high as the soul ever comes. But it is not thorough Christianity, for the Gospel is meant to make us certain and confident. The Spirit is given, not only as a "spirit of bondage again to fear," but as "the Spirit of adoption," which enables us to see and know and be sure that God is our gracious and merciful Father.

There are two witnesses on whose concurrent testimony the Christian is assured of his acceptance and divine sonship. People have often mistaken the

true nature of these witnesses, and substituted in their place a mere fanatical or enthusiastic conceit. John Wesley has well observed that many vain men here wrest the Scriptures to the great loss, if not the destruction, of their souls, mistaking the voice of their own imagination for the witness of the Spirit, and idly presume that they are the children of God while really doing the works of the devil; nay, and insist that we only resist and quench the Spirit when we try to bring them to a right knowledge of themselves. But there is no need to become entangled with such miserable and ruinous fanaticism; nor yet, because some are thus fanatical, are we to allow ourselves to be cheated out of that true, heavenly, and most consoling testimony by which it is meant to make us sure that we are the children of God if we be such in reality.

As to the testimony of our own spirit, the apostle says that "as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God." Now, we can very well know whether or not we give up to be and do what the Holy Ghost wills us to be and do. When we see from the plain Word that the Spirit of God wills us to repent out of our sins, to believe on Christ as our Lord and Saviour, to be baptized in His name for the washing away of our sins, to set ourselves to obey, love, and serve Him in all things, and to cleave to Him alone for salvation,—we certainly can know and tell whether we are moving and doing according to that will or not. Just as easily and as surely as we may know that we are alive may we know whether we are thus being led by the Spirit of

God. And when we are further told that "as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God," we may equally know whether or not we are among them. If our spirit is set to follow God's Spirit, it is the witness of our spirit that we are the children of God.

But conjoined with this there is another witness on the subject. Concurrent with the testimony of our spirit is the testimony of the divine Spirit, which is given in several ways.

First of all, the Holy Ghost testifies by the written Word. It there sets forth the terms, conditions, and blessedness of being God's children; assures us of the possibility, through faith in Christ, of our becoming all that is involved in such sacred childship; and urges and incites us to aim and strive after what is thus within our reach.

In the next place, it testifies by a regenerating and renewing power in the soul, awakening us to interest in these things, exciting a desire to partake of this blessedness, and actually moving us to that obedience and life which pertain to God's children. And in, with, and under these administrations there is also a living and comforting persuasion wrought in the soul of the sure love and favor of God through His Son Jesus Christ, which, accompanied with the testimony of our own spirit, becomes a living light and assurance that Jehovah is our gracious Father and that we are in very deed His approved and adopted children.

The degree of this may be less or more in one than in another, and may vary at different times in

the same individual; but if Christians are Christians, and enter at all into the realities of the faith and life they profess, they are not left to a dim and doubtful surmising which only vaguely hopes to be saved, but have a personal and unmistakable testimony that *they are saved* and that they *are* God's children. As they believe that Christ died for their sins, and that He is a competent and perfect Saviour, they are sure that those sins are covered, that there is now no more condemnation, and that they have by God's superabounding grace obtained the adoption of sons.

IV. Yet, again, I find it here set down among the peculiar privileges and dignities of true Christians that *they are possessed of a very exalted heirship.* This is necessarily implied in being God's children. Hence the Word, "If children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ." Children are the natural heirs of their parents. They share their parents' fortunes, they inherit their parents' property. And so the children of God are the heirs of God.

Not all heirships, however, are equally valuable. Some are next thing to worthless, and some are worse than none at all.

The value of heirship depends first upon the riches, dignity, and glory of the parent. Who would care to be the heir of a poor, mean, degraded, and obscure father? What profit is there in an empty fortune and an ill name? But suppose the parent to be illustrious, mighty, and vast in proprietorship, and it at once lifts and exalts the estate and prospects of his children? Now, the Christian's Father is the richest, most exalted, and most glorious

Being in existence. All the gold and the silver are His—all lands, all the cattle on a thousand hills, all the principalities and powers of all worlds. To be His child, then, is to be an heir to great dignity and blessedness. We may be but babes as yet, ill fitted to take and appropriate the inheritance, but it exists, and is ours, and is as sublime and unfailing as God Himself. There is not an excellence of attainment and fruition in all the kingdom of the eternal One which we may not count as ours, for we are His children, and if children then His heirs. Eye hath not seen, ear hath not heard, heart hath not conceived, the transcendent glories of the portion which thus pertains to the saints.

But the value of heirship depends, further, on *the certainty* of the inheritance. Be it never so great, if there are contingencies in the case it is proportionally depreciated. In the laws which regulate the successions of sovereigns there are heirs apparent and heirs presumptive. The heir apparent is he to whom, in direct course, the succession belongs. He stands first, possesses the first claim, and certainly takes the kingdom if he lives. The heir presumptive is he whose chances are more remote and uncertain, and who can only reach the inheritance in case of the death or incompetency of those ahead of him. His heirship is therefore less in value because of these doubtful contingencies. But the heirship of God's believing children is direct. There is no claim or title in advance of theirs. They are the heirs apparent, and as surely as they are and remain Christians the kingdom is theirs.

But the value of heirship depends yet further on *the nearness* of the inheritance. If it is far off; if it cannot be reached for a long, long time; if it must be waited for till there is scarcely any opportunity left for the enjoyment of it,—it is to that extent less worth the having. But in the case of God's children the inheritance is near. There is no waiting till the Father dies or the one in power passes away. We begin to enter upon it as we begin to be God's children, and every day as it passes brings us farther and farther into the fruition of it. Minors as we all are in this present life, we still have the anointing upon us, and already are recognized and blessed as the prospective occupants of immortal regencies and honors. The little waiting to become of age and to be graduated from these schools of trial is not without its blessed compensations, and it takes nothing whatever from the time for the everlasting enjoyment of what is so soon to come. Thus in every aspect and quality of the heirship of God's children it is transcendently valuable.

And yet the apostle adds a still further illustration of its preciousness. *It is a joint-heirship with Christ.* Think of the honor and glory which have fallen to our adorable Saviour by reason of His divine Sonship and obedience unto death for our salvation! Think of "the joy that was set before Him," and for which He so willingly "endured the cross, despising the shame"! Think of the glory with which He led captivity captive in His resurrection! Think how highly God has exalted Him, what a Name He has obtained, what authority and power He now

wields, what an eternal empire and dominion is His, and how all things in heaven and in earth and under the earth must now confess His lordship! Who can tell the infinitude of blessing and honor and glory and power which He has inherited, and will retain, world without end? Yet in all this He inherits nothing in which His people are not co-heirs with Him. What He gets, they get. His exaltation is their exaltation, and His glory is at the same time their glory; for they are *joint-heirs with Him*, and the eternal purpose is that they shall be glorified together.

Brethren, what has any other religion to offer to its devotees like the privileges and dignities which Christianity gives and propounds to those who truly embrace it? What is the Elysium of paganism, the sensuous Paradise of Mohammed, the genial hunting-ground of the Indian's dreams, compared with the immortal dignities and honors proposed to believers in our holy Evangely? What are all the dreams and hopes of all the religionists and savants of the earth that they should ever once be named by the side of the privileges and dignities of the saints?

And how strange, then, that when the same is preached unto men by authority so certainly divine, and carried by the messengers of God to the very doors of their dwellings, and pressed upon their acceptance by so many signs and wonders and miracles and gifts of the Holy Ghost, they should still remain dead and indifferent, and prefer the disabling vanities, delusive shows, and perishable gains of this fading world to becoming the freemen and sons and

heirs of God and joint-heirs with Jesus Christ! What if it does cost to be a Christian? What if it does require of us to deny ourselves, take up the cross, and plod our weary way as pilgrims and strangers on the earth? What if we are oftentimes afflicted, tried, oppressed, wronged, and aspersed with sneers and ridicule? The sufferings of this present time, be they what they may, are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us.

Therefore, my brethren, let us not by any means be moved away from the holy Gospel which we profess. It is our highest and most enriching treasure. We can find nothing like it anywhere else. There is nothing that can supply its place for life or death, for this world or the next. Let us, then, cleave to it with renewed attachment and devotion. Whatever else we may have to let go, let us hold on to our faith. For now are we the sons of God; and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that when He who is our life shall appear, we also shall appear with Him in glory.

Ninth Sunday after Trinity

1 Cor. 10:6–13: Now these things were our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted.

Neither be ye idolaters, as were some of them: as it is written, The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play.

Neither let us commit fornication, as some of them committed, and fell in one day three and twenty thousand.

Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents.

Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer.

Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come.

Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall.

There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.

NOTWITHSTANDING the very exalted privileges and endowments of Christians, it is not a matter of course that they will eventually reach the inheritance to which they are called. Grace may be misimproved and lost. The Epistle to the Hebrews speaks of the possibility of coming to a true Christian experience, entering into all the present possessions of faith, and tasting even the powers of the world to come, and yet falling away to ultimate perdition. There is

such a thing as apostasy, and a thousand insinuating temptations and dangers accompany the whole earthly career of the saints by which even the most favored may be turned from faith, rendered indifferent to what once so fully commanded them, and brought again under the old bondage of sin and condemnation. Paul himself feared lest, having preached to others, he himself should be a castaway; and in many parts of his writings he has left the most solemn cautions to those who think they stand to take heed lest they fall. Among these admonitions touching the perils of Christians is the Epistle Lesson now before us, in which he instances cases in which people had become partakers of very marvellous grace, and yet fell from it and perished, and which he here places before us as "ensamples" from which we are to take warning lest we too should fail to enter into His rest.

"*These things*" of which he speaks are the things narrated in the preceding part of the chapter—the things pertaining to the history of the children of Israel in their migration from Egypt to the land of promise, particularly the fatal disasters which befell many even after their gracious deliverance from their oppressive taskmasters. They are called "ensamples," types, pictorial illustrations, in which to read our own situation and danger, and what must result in the event that we behave as did those unfortunates. Looking, then, into this mirror, let us consider—

I. The Richness of the Divine Favors;
II. The Follies by which men Forfeit them.

And may the Holy Ghost duly quicken us to a right apprehension of the solemn subject!

I.

In contemplating the favors of God we are here called to look first at those vouchsafed to ancient Israel, and through them, as ensamples and types, at what has been vouchsafed to us under the Gospel.

That the cause of God might not totally perish from the earth, and to prepare for and develop that Seed of the woman who should bruise the serpent's head, Abraham was called to become the father of a chosen race and the head of a new nation, fenced off from the rest of mankind as the repository of the divine oracles and promises, the conservators of the true faith and worship, and the medium for the introduction of the long-promised redemption. After a few hundred years these elect people were groaning in the depths of a most distressing bondage in Egypt. To deliver them and bring them forth to their own country Moses was commissioned from the burning bush, endowed with miraculous power to smite their tyrant oppressors, and accomplish the good pleasure of the Lord concerning them.

In the course of this history God's hand was shown in a manner the most marvellous since the bringing of Noah and his family to the hither side of an ocean world. By various miraculous signs Moses convinced his brethren that God sent him and was now about to fulfil the promises made to their fathers. He went to Pharaoh, and in Jehovah's name demanded the emancipation of Israel. And when

the king, in haughty insolence to the Name of Jehovah, refused, a succession of terrific judgments smote him and his people with plague after plague until a great cry filled all the land of Egypt, for in every house the first-born was a corpse. In his horror the impious tyrant at last acquiesced in the divine demand, and consented to let the people go.

But hardly had they begun to move in their intended migration before Pharaoh repented of his permission, assembled his army, headed it in person, and set out for the recapture of his departing slaves. The fugitives were soon overtaken and brought to sore straits. Before them was the sea, on either hand were the mountains, and on their rear were the pursuing hosts. Flight was impossible; resistance was death. Consternation seized them and utter destruction seemed inevitable. Moses alone was calm and confident. Bitter reproaches were heaped upon him for leading his brethren into such a trap; but his answer was, "Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord, which He will show to you to-day" (Ex. 14 : 13). A mysterious cloud came and stationed itself between them and their pursuers. It was a cloud of brightness to Israel, but a cloud of threatening and darkness to the Egyptians. It was the cloud of the presence of Him who is ever a guide and protection to His people and a frowning terror to their enemies. And by that cloud God held the pursuers in check.

Meanwhile, a voice from heaven bade Moses strike the sea; and he struck it. At the stroke its waves parted from shore to shore and stood on heaps on

either side, opening a solid highway through its depths from Egypt to Arabia. Down into the dreadful chasm the people marched, "and were baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea." Many miles they journeyed through the cloven deep, and ere the morning dawned they had touched the farther shore. Into that gaping mouth of hell Pharaoh and his armed hosts essayed to follow. They had reached the middle of the sea as the last of Israel set foot on the Arabian shores. Then came again the voice from heaven bidding Moses once more to smite the sea; and as he smote it the gaping chasm closed, and Pharaoh and all his hosts were buried in its depths. When the daylight arose the ransomed multitudes looked, and, behold, the whole coast-line was strewn with the corpses of men and horses, the fragments of chariots and weapons of war, and the wrecks of Egypt's extinct army.

It was one of the most marvellous deliverances ever wrought in human history. It was the birth of a new nation amid throes of anguish such as scarce another nation ever felt. It was a grand salvation, over which Moses and Miriam and all the congregation sang and shouted and gave glory to God. It was a putting forth of redemptive power from which prophets and sacred minstrels of all the after ages kindled their glad lays, and which has not yet ceased to thrill and astound the world.

But a vast howling wilderness still lay between them and the land of their destination—a wilderness unmarked by paths of travel, destitute of bread and water, and filled with hardships, enemies, and dan

gers. And in the provisions for this pilgrimage very marked and marvellous were the divine favors. The miraculous pillar of cloud went before the people by day as a personal divine leader, and stood over them as a pillar of fire by night. When they needed bread, God sent it from heaven, and they found it spread around their camp each morning in ample sufficiency. When the water was undrinkable, He cured the brackish springs that they might drink, and afterward brought plentiful supplies out of the smitten rock which seemed never to be beyond their reach. He set up His holy tabernacle among them, whence His voice and blessing issued, and laid His benediction on their very clothing that it waxed not old. When they were faint and disheartened He comforted them, and as an eagle beareth her young upon her wings, so did the Lord bear them to bring them to their own land. Ay, so great and wonderful were the facts that the faith of ages has been tasked to credit them.

But "these things were our examples," *τύποι*, figures, types, of more precious favors since vouchsafed to our race. A worse bondage than Israel ever felt in Egypt had befallen all the children of Adam. For ages the whole race had been groaning and travailing together in pain, with nature itself participant in the sore bondage to corruption. Many professed deliverers came, but they were deceivers and thieves, who stole the confidence of men only to betray them into deeper sorrows and weld their chains the tighter. God saw and pitied, and sent His only-begotten Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem the

helpless sufferers and bring them forth to a blessed home-land of promise, peace, and rest.

Jesus came to His people with a hundred-fold more numerous miracles than Moses wrought, and all of them miracles of mercy, not of judgment. He arranged a more wonderful Passover, Himself becoming the sacrificial lamb, whose blood was for the warding off of a more terrible death than fell on Egypt's first-born.

Pursued as they were by the giant power of a condemning and outraged law, helpless against its imperious demands, exposed to a threatened fate more terrible than the angered Pharaoh and all his armed battalions could inflict, and shut in on all sides to a hopeless destruction, He preached a far more joyous confidence, and followed it by a smiting at which the earth vibrated, and by the institution of a Baptism into His death opened up a deliverance over which Heaven thrilled and men and angels ever sing.

God hath wrought great things by water. The earth was born of water. When the primeval world had utterly corrupted it, it was cleansed and reborn of water. The most favored nation that ever occupied the earth was ushered into its separate and peculiar existence by passing through the sea, and entered upon its inheritance by a like passage through the river. The most stirring moral revolution ever wrought in the history of that people was through the ministry of John, who came baptizing with water. And so the grandest spiritual regeneration ever provided for man in any age is connected with the wash-

ing of water. The multitudinous aggregate of ransomed souls which is called *the Church*, the Bride of the Lamb, is brought to its glorious status by "the washing of water with the Word." All its members have been "born of water and of the Spirit." Noah and his house were "saved by water, the like figure whereunto even Baptism doth also now save us, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ" (1 Pet. 3 : 21). If any are not "born of water and of the Spirit, they cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven" (John 3 : 5). If any are not baptized, they are not proper disciples of Christ; for the only way He has instituted for the making of disciples is by baptizing them in His name and teaching them to observe His commandments (Matt. 28 : 19). Salvation is "by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost" (Tit. 3 : 5). The putting on of Christ as our Mediator is by being "baptized into Christ" (Gal. 3 : 27). All the saving fruits of His redemption are wrapped up with Baptism (Rom. 6 : 3–5). Yea, with this gentle and bloodless sacrament, which even little babes upon their pillows and weakest invalids on their couches can receive, God has linked the sublimest regenerating deliverance ever vouchsafed to mortal man—deliverance from sin, death, and the devil—and new birth to everlasting life. What was the escape of Israel through the Red Sea compared with a Baptism which buries all condemnation in the deep, consecrates to a divine sonship, and sets upon the path of life and progress to be consummated in the eternal blessedness of heaven? Loud as Moses sung, joyously as Miriam danced, and sublimely as

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Israel thrilled, as they saw their oppressors overwhelmed, it was only an earthly picture of the spiritual reality we now possess by Baptism into Jesus Christ.

True, it has not yet put us across the desert of this world. Nevertheless, God has shown a transcendent goodness in the provisions He has made for our pilgrimage through this wilderness. The same divine Guide who directed Israel in the pillar of cloud and fire we have—not veiled and hidden as then, but personally revealed in the Man of Nazareth. As truly now as then may every believer sing, "He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness, for His Name's sake." In humanity like our own, and "tempted in all points like as we are," He goeth before us, "leaving us an example that we should follow His steps." Having traversed the whole way Himself, He is a perfect Captain of salvation to bring many sons to glory. Looking unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith, we now can lay aside every weight of doubtful anxiety and run with untroubled confidence the race that is set before us. His cross is the tree to make the bitter waters sweet. He is Himself the manna from heaven, the living bread, which whosoever eateth shall hunger no more. And He is the true Rock of Horeb, smitten to slake the thirst of famished souls, whence streams of living waters flow as from imperishable wells springing up into everlasting life.

There used to be in some old Bibles a picture of the children of Israel engaged in gathering up the manna in the wilderness, which had over it the

words: "*Come, O world! and gather! The manna falls yet, even to-day!*" It was the expression of a great evangelic truth. The manna falls yet, even to-day—the precious manna of God's free grace, plentiful for each day's necessity as it comes, and doubled when the last before the heavenly Sabbath is reached. It falls in our sanctuaries, in every Christian home, along every highway, and in all the fields of Christendom; and over all ever sounds the heavenly word, "*Come, O world! and gather! The manna falls yet, even to-day!*" And in like manner the fountain of eternal salvation ever flows, while the blessed Jesus stands and cries, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink."

Such, then, is something of the richness of the divine favors.

Let us glance now at the other part of the picture and see—

II. The Follies by which men Forfeit them.

Scarcely less marvellous than God's favors to ancient Israel was the ill behavior of many under them. Of course these people were but frail and fallible men. They had also been brought up as oppressed slaves in connection with the multiform abominations of an all-pervading idolatry. It would not be just to measure them by the standards which ought to hold in a cultured and educated Christian society. But, allowing for all their disadvantages, they behaved badly, displeased God, and "were overthrown in the wilderness." We cannot but wonder how there could come such ingratitude, non-

appreciation, and perversity on the part of people redeemed by such invincible proofs of the majesty and goodness of God, living on divine miracles, and never out of sight of the symbol of His presence, Whom wind and sea obeyed, and to Whom all the powers and gods of Egypt were as nothing. But the facts are attested by both Testaments.

Sundry items of Israel's unfaithfulness are here noted, along with the terrible consequences that followed, to serve as warnings to us not to imitate them, on pain of being ourselves cut off from the promised rest.

1. The apostle says they "lusted after evil things." Their appetites were nursed into a greater strength than their faith in God. Hardly had they left the shores where their oppressors perished before they began to wish themselves back in Egypt's brickyards. The leeks and onions and pots of flesh and fish of the Nile which they had left behind rose to more consequence in their esteem and desire than the promises of God. Weary of trusting in Heaven, they lost relish for the food rained upon them from heaven, and made more of the perverse cravings of their stomachs than of the hopes of Paradise. They were miserable without flesh; they must have flesh. God in His anger gave it to them, and they gormandized to fulness. But their relish became their bane. While the flesh was yet between their teeth the plague struck them, and the lusting rebels died in multitudes.

It is the same with many now. More disorders, ailments, sins, and judgments are upon the world

from over-eating and drinking than from any one other source. Multitudes sacrifice health on earth and blessedness in eternity to their table pleasures. A pampered appetite is their heaven. They cannot be content with eating to live; they must live to eat. They must have wine to refresh them; they must have stimulation to keep their spirits up and drive away their gnawing miseries. They do not mean to leave off going to heaven, but they must have good times by the way, and are impatient under any abridgment of their sumptuary gratifications. No matter at what cost, or who may suffer, or what diseases it may breed upon themselves, they must feast their appetite and gormandize and guzzle, forgetting that gluttons, winebibbers, and belly-worshippers are "the enemies of the cross of Christ" (Phil. 3 : 18, 19).

2. Again, it is said of these people that they craved the pleasures and frolic of heathen festivities, and insisted on indulging themselves therein. Even while Moses was in the mount with God, and the awful signs of Jehovah's presence had scarce died away, they compelled Aaron to make for them a golden calf after the manner of the ox-worship of Egypt, stript themselves in indecent nakedness before it, and sacrificed and danced, and in their wild and wanton excesses cried, "These be thy gods, O Israel!"

And this love of the world and its ways, this greed for its fashions, its extravagances, its gayeties, its boisterous and wanton pleasures, its amusements, its many cunning inventions to veil the indulgence of carnal passion with the guise of gentility and give license to unruly lust,—what rival gods has it set up

against Jehovah! What wrecks of faith has it made! How has it eaten away all holy principle from hearts once given to God! What multitudes of names has it caused to be blotted out of the book of life! What souls has it seduced to eternal immolation! The forms of idol-worship may not be so gross and scandalous among us as in those ancient times, but the soul of it still lives, and is hurrying hundreds and thousands of professed Christians to inevitable perdition while fondly dreaming that they are on the way to heaven. We have only to look around us to see the zeal and zest with which people worship Mammon, fashion, society, pleasure, place, self, and carnal greed, and give to a dozen things the heart-devotion which they owe alone to God. The professed Church is full of golden calves to-day, and their worshippers are legion, vexing Jehovah's ministers, overpowering all their dissuasions, and calling down the judgment-plagues of Heaven.

3. Fornication is named as another of the fatal crimes charged against these unfaithful people. So general was the transgression in this line that there fell of them in one day three-and-twenty thousand. And, of all the deadly sins, there is none more subtle and potent than this in enervating faith, deadening the soul, wasting the moral stamina of society, and rotting down the strength of mankind. The same, alas! is coming up again in fearful prevalence as in heathen times. Such relaxation of moral decency is working its way through the community that many think little of living in adultery, and often make boast and jest of their scandalous impurities.

Ay, it was not without reason that the first Christian council laid it upon all who hope for eternal life to abstain from fornication. The strange woman, with her flattering words, is in every one's path to beguile unstable souls to the house of death. And every one needs to be on guard against the damning maelstrom of incontinence and harlotry; for "no whoremonger nor unclean person hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God" (Eph. 5 : 5).

4. Tempting and wearying out the Angel of the Covenant, which was Christ, is another ruinous crime written against these people. They tried and vexed the Lord beyond endurance. The very men who saw His glory, beheld His miracles in Egypt, and had personal experience of His marvellous benefactions, thus tempted Him "*ten times*." Again and again they declaimed against God's providence, faulted His administrations, and resisted His goodwill, wearying out His gracious forbearance, until He sware in His wrath that they should not enter into His rest (Num. 14 : 22, 23).

And one of the most prevalent sins of mankind to this day is just this ungrateful, hard-hearted, and persistent abuse of the Saviour's goodness, presumption on His mercy, and stiffening of neck against His will. It is the common temptation, in the Church and in the hearts of God's professed followers, as well as elsewhere, and ruining the hopes of many who count themselves Christian people. With all their vows upon them, with all their experience of His favors, and with all their knowledge of His power and greatness, they think nothing of breaking

His commandments, trampling on His Word, and making light of His favor whenever obedience does not suit their convenience and pleasure. Oh, the God-wearying perverseness and presumptions by which people tempt Christ by counting on His salvation while bent on serving their own likes!

5. And yet again it is written of these people that they "*murmured*, and were destroyed of the destroyer." To obey with an unwilling spirit is as bad as not to obey at all. In this case the way was laborious and discouraging, and it filled the people with complainings. Nothing suited them. Moses was at the head of things, and they growled that their rights were disregarded, reviled his administration, and plotted with each other to displace him. The spies brought ill report of the land, and they denounced the whole scheme of their deliverance as a scandal, and were ready to kill their God-appointed leader. The result of all this was that God cast off every one of them from the promised inheritance, and left their bones to moulder in unsanctified graves in the wilderness.

Dear friends, "these things were our examples," to show us how we may turn our Christian hopes to ashes and forfeit all Heaven's favors. The pictures are too plain and too vividly drawn for us to mistake them. Not the open and avowed enemies of Christianity are here in contemplation, but professed Christians—people who have received Baptism, who appear in the congregation of those on the way to the heavenly rest, who have had knowledge and experience of the wondrous grace of God, who have

accepted place as heirs to the promises, joined in the songs of deliverance, tasted of the Bread from heaven, drank of the waters from the smitten Rock, stationed themselves under the leadership of God's pillar of cloud and fire, and come far on the way toward the heavenly Canaan.

And what is the lesson thus thundered into our ears? The apostle has not left it to inference. He has pointedly formulated it for us, that no one may mistake it. He puts it in words so plain that he who runs may read it, and even the fool may understand it.

Christianity has lifted us to an exalted vantage-ground. All the resources of God have been expended upon us for the bringing of us to immortal glory. On us "the ends of the world are come." The experiences of ages and the results of all the dispensations of God are here for our enlightenment and help. The goodness and grace of Jehovah have brought us close to the border-line of the eternal rest. But our ultimate salvation is not a matter of course. We still may fail. Though we have come to the very margin of heaven, we may fail. The text tells us how we may fail, and how dreadful that failure shall be if we should be so unfortunate as to make it. Therefore the word to every one of us is, "*Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed, lest he fall.*" God will bring us through with faithful Caleb and Joshua if we are true. With every temptation He has engaged to open a way of escape. But if we give place to the ill temper of their unfaithful and undutiful companions, no heavenly Canaan shall we ever reach.

Tenth Sunday after Trinity.

1 Cor. 12 : 1–11 : Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I would not have you ignorant.

Ye know that ye were Gentiles, carried away unto these dumb idols, even as ye were led.

Wherefore I give you to understand, that no man speaking by the Spirit of God, calleth Jesus accursed: and that no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost.

Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit.

And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord.

And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all.

But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal.

For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another, the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; to another, faith by the same Spirit; to another, the gifts of healing by the same Spirit; to another, the working of miracles; to another, prophecy; to another, discerning of spirits; to another, divers kinds of tongues; to another, the interpretation of tongues: but all these worketh that one and the self-same Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will.

HRISTIANITY, as a religion of mingled truth and miracle, necessarily has to do with spiritualities, or that realm of things in which the powers and operations of divine grace are made living in men. Of this the apostle here comes to speak. Whether his discourse on the subject was volunteered or requested does not appear; but the whole matter is so important that it

needed something of this special treatment for the instruction of the Church in all places and ages. In the presentations which come before us in the text we may note,

I. A General View of these Spiritualities;
II. Some Great Truths with regard to Them.

Looking, then, for the aid of that Holy Spirit on whom we are dependent for all spiritual light and grace, let us endeavor to get some intelligent and practical hold of the great subject.

I.

When the purposes of Christ's coming in the flesh were accomplished and He rose again from the dead, He introduced a new potency among men and put in force a new principle of life for the formation of a new and peculiar commonwealth on earth. Hence His commands to His chosen friends to go into all the world and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, and teaching them to observe whatsoever He had commanded; at the same time promising to be with them alway, even unto the end of the world. And yet for all the time of these operations it was in His purpose and plan to be personally absent. But when He exchanged His crown of thorns for a crown of glory, and ascended to His heavenly estate as "Head over all things to the Chuach," He sent forth, according to His promise, another Paraclete, to act for Him and in His stead as the coequal di-

vine Dispenser of all the gifts, ministries, and operations necessary to the full equipment of the new commonwealth. On the day of Pentecost that promised Paraclete came in wonderful energy, confirming Christ's doctrine and mission and sealing the new charter of the world's blessedness in Him. By this sublime outpouring of the Holy Ghost came a mysterious spiritual power, endowing the Church with a vast variety of supernatural graces and possessions for its successful planting and perpetuation in the midst of a corrupt and antagonizing world. And these endowments the apostle here calls "diversities of gifts," "differences of administrations," and "diversities of operations."

When we speak of persons as *gifted* we mean that they are favored with certain qualities in which they excel. A man's gifts, ordinarily speaking, are his special talents, aptitudes, or capacities in which his chief strength lies. Thus, one has the gift of eloquence, another the gift of wit, another the gift of invention, another the gift of mental balance and good judgment, another the gift of administration and rulership, another the gift of taste and artistic ability or a turn for efficiency in some particular avocation. Some have a variety of such gifts in combination. These natural or acquired qualities are *gifts*, because they are all from God and His favoring providence. They also form the basis of the Spirit's operations. And when such natural qualities are taken hold of by the Spirit and consecrated to God in holy activities for His glory, they also come within the sphere of what are called *spiritual gifts*.

But while the gifts of the Spirit thus include and largely follow the constitutional bent of individuals, they are very much more than the mere consecration of what is. The apostle gives an extensive list of them, by which we may judge of their nature and range.

The first named, and that which lies at the foundation of all the gifts of the Spirit, is the gift of justifying faith, or that illumination, help, and divine motion created in the soul through the truth which enables it to see, embrace, and confess Jesus of Nazareth as its Lord and Saviour. When Peter answered to the Lord's question, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God," Jesus said to him, "Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona; flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but My Father which is in heaven" (Matt. 16 : 16, 17). And so Paul here gives it as a fundamental principle in the Christian spiritualities "that no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost." Elsewhere he says, "By grace ye are saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God" (Eph. 2 : 8). The recognition and acceptance of Jesus as our Lord and Saviour must accordingly be viewed as the fundamental gift of the Spirit on which all other spiritual gifts are built. A man may be a Christian and not have the other gifts named, but no man can have the supernatural favors here enumerated who has no faith in Jesus as his Lord and Saviour.

The additional gifts here enumerated mostly fall into three groups, according to the three departments of man's constitution: 1, gifts of intellectual

power; 2, gifts related to the feelings and emotions; 3, gifts related to the will, the deeds and ministrations of practical life and church government. But the simplest way of contemplating them is to follow the order in which the apostle gives them.

As the highest in this special list he names "*the word of wisdom*" and "*the word of knowledge*." What the exact difference between these two is has not been conclusively made out. "The word of wisdom" most likely refers to that complete mastery of all sacred truth which was divinely given to the inspired apostles, together with their supernatural ability rightly to communicate and record it; while "the word of knowledge" most likely refers to a divine illumination and insight into what has been made known by the prophets and apostles, and such an exact and competent understanding of revealed truth as to enable some to become teachers without dependence upon the ordinary means to qualify them for such work.

"*Faith*" is next named. "This is not the common faith in Christ by which we are justified before God and receive forgiveness of sins; for justifying faith must be found in every Christian, although he may not possess the peculiar gift of which Paul here speaks. The reference is to a particular virtue or power of the Holy Ghost wrought in the Church, by which some can perform great and valuable things by means of a high and undoubting courage" (Luther). It is sometimes called *heroic* faith, or that particular energy and heroism of faith which goes forward to grand achievements against obstacles

dangers, and seeming impossibilities, which the apostle speaks of as able "to remove mountains," and of which Paul and Luther were illustrious examples.

"*Gifts of healing*" come next in the catalogue. This was a supernatural power over diseases and ordinary bodily infirmities. It was a spiritual will-power in the name and for the glory of Christ, by which some by mere word or prayer or laying on of hands could on occasion relieve sufferers of whatsoever troubles they had.

To this was added "*miracles*" or supernatural powers of a higher kind and more varied range—the power to perform not only without means what means might effect, but what no means can effect, such as raising the dead, casting out demons, restoring hopeless cripples, and commanding the instantaneous judgments of God. Many instances of the exercise of such powers are recorded in apostolic history.

Then comes the gift of "*prophecy*," or such exalted spiritual elevation as enabled the speaker to perceive, realize, and set forth the hidden mind, will, and purposes of God. It was not only an ecstatic prevision of things about to happen, but a special illumination respecting the divine counsels, the meaning of the Scriptures, the secrets of men's hearts, the abysses of sin, and the consequences of actions, so as to be of important service to the Church. But it was a gift so liable to be counterfeited that it made another necessary—namely,

"*Discerning of spirits.*" This was a divinely-given or divinely-quickened power to judge rightly in all

cases of alleged inspiration or supernatural influence, to perceive and reveal character, to discriminate between specious falsehood and truth, and to expose hypocrisy and lies. It was by such power that Paul saw through Elymas, and that Peter detected the deceit of Ananias and Sapphira in thinking to impose on the Holy Ghost.

Another special endowment of the Spirit was the gift of "*divers kinds of tongues.*" This seems to have been of two sorts—the exaltation of the soul to become the mouthpiece of the Holy Spirit in languages never learned by the speaker, and the same in unknown tongues not at all familiar to man. The apostles on the day of Pentecost were enabled to speak and glorify God in foreign tongues till then unknown to them, but comprehensible to those brought up in them. In many other cases, however, what was called speaking in the Spirit or speaking with tongues was very little more than ecstatic vociferation in prayer, praise, or general discourse, unintelligible to the hearers and often unintelligible to the speaker. As a special gift of the Spirit it belonged only to some, and stood in close relation to the gift of prophecy, though inferior to it. Its exercise was not through the medium of reflecting intelligence, but through the excitement of the feelings, begetting a sort of mystic talk with God or rapturous soliloquy—very enjoyable and edifying, no doubt, to the person himself, yet for the most part a dumb show to outsiders, which might indeed suggest the presence of a mysterious divine power, and thus lead to seriousness, but otherwise of no great profit unless

explained. It therefore called for still another gift, here styled

"*The interpretation of tongues.*" Sometimes the speaker could explain what he said in his spiritual frenzy, but more frequently not; and sometimes neither the speaker nor any one else could make out these ecstatic utterances, in which case the apostle compares them to the indistinct and uncertain sounds of a damaged or mishandled musical instrument, more annoying than profitable. But this speaking with tongues had its worth. It served as a sign and demonstration of a divine presence, which must have contributed largely to awe and impress beholders. And utterances often came in these frenzied spiritual ecstasies of no small profit when correctly interpreted, to which end it was the further special gift of some to be able to understand and render them for the Church's benefit.

Such varied heavenly power, brought into living activity in and upon earthly humanity, and hence ever more or less mixed with the weaknesses of man, might be expected to develop many extravagances and disorders, especially as the diffusion of it was not confined to any one class, but extended to all classes—male and female, young and old, the illiterate and impulsive as well as the wise and considerate. The very diversity of the gifts attendant upon it would unavoidably tend to the crowding of the exercise of them upon one another. Some would claim to be the organs of the Spirit who had nothing of the root of the matter in them. Some would be dissatisfied and envious that others had powers which

they had not. Some would be unduly inflated, and press forward to make a show of their newly acquired powers. With the trained and fully-endowed apostles there was no danger of this sort, as they understood the whole matter thoroughly, and also operated for the most part in widely-separated spheres. But in the local congregations of their converts it could not well have been otherwise than that irregularities and confusion should betimes occur, especially when no apostle was present to keep things right. Such, at any rate, was the fact in the church at Corinth. The whole congregation had grown into a state of faction one toward another, and the greatest disorders had crept in. One was for Paul, another for Peter, another for Apollos, and another for Christ, after the manner of the sects and parties in heathenism, and according to the factious turbulence of the Greeks in particular. They even made a frolic of the Lord's Supper, and the irregularities in everything else corresponded. Speaking in the Spirit and speaking with tongues being among the more showy and most easily simulated of the gifts of the Spirit, this was so overdone as to become a scandal to their assemblies. The heathenish spirit and ill passions of human nature came to be mixed up with the operations of the Spirit of God, to the great detriment and spoliation of the Gospel. And to separate these intermixtures and bring evangelic order into this chaos was the apostolic work to which Paul here set himself, seeing that God is a God of order and not of confusion.

We come, then, to notice,

II. Some Great Truths respecting these Sacred Spiritualities.

First of all, the apostle lays it down as an unchangeable rule that nothing is from the Spirit of God which does not acknowledge, confess, and supremely honor Jesus of Nazareth as man's only Lord and Saviour. Christ Himself defined the sphere and office of the Holy Ghost when He said, "The Comforter, whom I will send unto you from the Father, He shall testify of Me;" "He shall glorify Me; for He shall receive of Mine, and show it unto you" (John 15:26; 16:14). Hence, whatever was not to the honor and glory of Christ could not possibly be from the Holy Ghost, no matter what inspiration or supernatural power it might show or claim.

The language of the apostle assumes that spiritual manifestations existed which had no connection with Christ, disallowed His claims, and held Him to be accursed. The heathen world was full of such, and they had their following even among the Jews. Magicians, sorcerers, pythonesses, demon oracles, necromancers, and a thousand kinds of practitioners in the black arts, all claiming supernatural powers from spirits and gods and potencies of the unseen world, —of these our modern Spiritualists and mediums are the representatives and successors. It would also seem as if some of these had affiliated with the church at Corinth, and were being favored and honored as partakers of the same spiritualities with Christians.

As a matter of fact, no heathen oracles, sooth-

sayers, necromancers, or spirits speaking through them or through our modern Spiritualistic mediums, ever did or ever do acknowledge, accept, and glorify Christ as man's true and only Lord and Saviour. Questioned and pressed to honest answer on this point, they at once begin to prevaricate, blaspheme, and curse Him, or else cower and confess themselves demons, liars, and deceivers, having neither part nor lot in the favor and kingdom of God. It is on this fact that St. John bases his command to test all cases of alleged inspiration and "try the spirits," saying, "Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus the Christ is come in the flesh is of God; and every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus the Christ is come in the flesh is not of God," but belongs to the infernal kingdom of Antichrist (1 John 4 : 2, 3).

This, then, the apostle would have these Corinthian Christians and all Christians understand, and requires of them to reject and condemn all spiritualities and inspirations as certainly of the devil, and not at all to be tolerated as belonging to the kingdom of grace, if unattended with the confession of Jesus as the Lord, or not unconditionally given to the glorifying of Him as the one only Mediator. It was a deep-reaching and thorough-going rule, but the infallible rule of truth and righteousness on the subject, drawing a broad, palpable, and ineffaceable line of demarcation between Christianity and all heathenism and false religion, past, present, and to come.

And with the setting forth of this fundamental law for the determination of what supernaturalism is

of the Holy Ghost and what not, the apostle at the same time calls attention to the radical difference between the Christian spiritualities and what obtained in heathenism. He appeals to the experience of these Corinthians as to how it was with them before their conversion to the Gospel. Then they were impelled or blindly led hither and thither to idols without intelligence or speech. Then they were bandied about just as the impulse for the time happened to be. The picture implies that there was no fixed principle or cohering unity in the heathen oracles. As there were "gods many and lords many," so there was now a running to one and then to another, amid conflicting teachings, with nothing clear and settled on which to rely. The whole system was a multiform imposture and deceit, leading in fluctuating and often opposite directions according to the fictions, devices, manipulations, and blind enthusiasm of men or the subtlety of sorcerers and demon spirits, with nothing in common but their badness and their efforts to gain adherents to false pretensions and lies. And as these Corinthians had been in their heathenism, so they were again becoming in their Christianity.

But the pure and saving spiritualities of the Gospel admit of no such a state of things. Though the gifts of the Spirit are diversified, yet, as "there is one God, and one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus," so there is but one Spirit of "the same God which worketh all in all." There is indeed a Trinity in the Godhead which the apostle here recognizes. He ascribes the charisms (gifts) to

the Spirit, the ministries to *the Lord*, and the effects or potential results to *God*, while yet he emphasizes a sameness and identity in the workings of the Spirit, the Lord, and God. There are Three, and yet not Three in any such sense as not to be essentially One, binding up the whole economy of these operations as the products of one and the same Deity. If men had gifts of the Spirit, they were gifts of God through the Holy Ghost; if they had ministries of the Lord, they were ministries of God through Jesus Christ; and if they possessed any effective supernatural powers, they were the divine powers of the same eternal Godhead. The whole system is one of absolute unity. All the manifold gifts, offices, and powers pertaining to the Church as a spiritual commonwealth or to its individual members are from one and the same Spirit of one and the same God.

It was not possible, therefore, that one gift of the Holy Ghost should be antagonistic to another, or that one should exalt and oppose itself against another, as might have seemed from the manifestations among these factious Corinthians. Each party claimed to have the Spirit in dissenting from the other; but the professed inspiration of one or all necessarily was spurious or demoniacal, for God cannot be at war with Himself, nor the Spirit be arrayed against the Spirit. The gifts, offices, and works might differ, but as they were from one God, the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, factiously to exalt and boast of one to the discredit of others could be only from some foreign spirit, and not at all from the Spirit of God. If there be dissensions, sects, and

divisions, the one setting up against the other, arraying apostles against apostles, erecting altar against altar, and exalting this or that as alone of the Spirit while everything else is condemned, it is sure indication that the creators and abettors of the schism either do not at all understand the true Gospel or serve only their own conceit, self-seeking, and wicked pride. When people trust in themselves that they are righteous and despise others, it is the Pharisee that is in them, and not the Holy Ghost. Diversity there must needs be, but it must be diversity in unity or it is not of God. There is nothing more diversified than nature, but where the diversity is out of harmony some bad spirit is the cause.

A commonwealth needs many kinds of offices and officers, and great varieties of talents and occupations in its citizens, in order to its full development and prosperity. The governor is not the state; the legislature is not the state; the courts are not the state; the army is not the state; the individual citizens are not the state; but that is the state in which all these are bound up together, with all their offices, functions, powers, pursuits, and possessions, into one organic body politic, each filling his own place and sphere for the common weal. Or, taking the apostle's own figure, the head is not the body; the chest is not the body; the limbs are not the body; and no particular part inside or outside is the body; but that is the body in which the bony framework and ligaments and muscles and the various systems of alimentation, circulation, respiration, and sensation, each with its own peculiar functions and activities,

are incorporated into one living organism, in which each particular part is interrelated with every other, so that none can be spared without damage if not death to the whole. In both these instances the diversity is necessary to the unity, and the unity to the diversity; so that to destroy the unity or to break up the diversity is equally fatal. And so the Church is one living organism, of which Christ is the Head, believers the members, and the Holy Ghost the all-pervading and all-inspiring life, giving to every one his place, gifts, and functions for the common good.

It is the office and intent of the Christian spiritualities to sanctify all natural talents, qualities, relations, and circumstances, and to unite them in one organic spiritual commonwealth, in which it is every one's highest honor and happiness to have place, no matter how humble may be his gifts or sphere. To be made partaker of the Holy Ghost so far as to know, confess, and confide in Jesus as our Lord and Saviour is itself an unmerited and transcendent favor and gift of God. In that alone we become an organic part of so exalted a kingdom that there is no occasion left us for envying those whom the Holy Ghost has chosen for higher places than we can fill, or for being dissatisfied with our lot. If some are apostles, and some are prophets, and some are pastors and teachers, and some are workers of miracles, and some have the gifts of healing, and some speak with tongues, and some are gifted with the interpretation of tongues, all this is necessary and for our benefit. We could not be the Christians that we are,

nor could the Church itself exist, without these particular gifts and callings. Wherefore, then, should we be jealous and discontented because the like have not fallen to us? All cannot be presidents and legislators and judges and military commanders; but those that are have their places and functions for our profit equally with their own. Orderly and dutiful citizens are as necessary to rulers as rulers are to them, and all are necessary to each other. Peter is not to be despised because he is not a Paul, nor a Paul because he is not an Apollos, nor a private Christian because he is not privileged to be a teacher in the pulpit. What if a foot is not a hand, and an ear is not an eye, and the parts we cover are not the comely parts which can decently be exposed? There is no reason in that for the higher to contemn the lower, or for the lower and weaker to be jealous and dissatisfied that they are not made for more exalted place and functions. The lower cannot do without the higher, and the higher cannot do without the lower, and each in its place and sphere is required for all the rest. Take away any part, and disability and suffering ensue, and life departs from all.

Nor is there really more happiness in the greater than in the lesser gifts. The higher the gifts, the greater the responsibilities and the severer the trials. Special greatness has its special penalties and its special perils. The taller the trees the more do they catch the storms and draw upon them the lightnings. If Judas had not been an apostle he would not have had upon him the crime of such an infamous betrayal of his Lord. Mary Magdalene and Joanna and

Mary the mother of James and other women that companied with the Lord were as honorable and useful in their places as Peter and Thomas in theirs, while they escaped the temptation to deny Christ like the one and to hide away in sullen unbelief like the other.

And yet we are to "covet earnestly the best gifts," because it is our Christian calling to do the best service we can. What we have we can improve if we will, and what we have not we may still get, in so far as may be accordant with the will of the Spirit. Exercising the gifts we possess, they must needs strengthen into greater power, so that "to him that hath shall be given, and he shall have more abundance." Apostles we cannot be, and the bridal glories in which the gifts of the Spirit bloomed in their day to meet the necessities of their office and times we may not hope to possess. Human nature could not have endured the continuation of the ecstatic strain of such mighty streams of heavenly power. The splendid blossom had to fade and fall away to make room for the steady development of the fruit which it started. But the Holy Ghost still lives and works, and "the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal." His more ordinary gifts and powers continue with the Church for the sanctification of men and the endowment of them with His blessed fruits. "Love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance," —these we can have, and in these we can ever profit. In these, therefore, let us ever strive to abound, that the Holy Ghost may live in us and walk in us.

Eleventh Sunday after Trinity.

1 Cor. 15 : 1–10: Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the Gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; by which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain.

For I delivered unto you first of all, that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the Scriptures: and that he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve: after that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep.

After that, he was seen of James; then of all the apostles.

And last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time.

For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the Church of God.

But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me, was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.

THIS Epistle to the Corinthians is one of the first written books contained in the New Testament. Only the two short letters to the Thessalonians were penned before it; all the other parts, both Gospels and Epistles, were written afterward. It is therefore very valuable to Christians as the earliest account we have of the original institutes of our holy religion. "It is in every sense the earliest chapter of the history of the

Christian Church." The particular part now before us somewhat summarizes the whole Epistle, and so the whole system in which our salvation stands. We need only consider it attentively, as penned by the great apostle, to find the primary features of the Christian economy—how it came, in what it consists, how it operates, on what it depends, as well as its aim and purpose in the world. So pregnant a subject would of course require volumes to exhaust. A mere sketch of the more obvious particulars is all that I now attempt.

I. Notice the account here given of the early propagation of Christianity. Corinth was a heathen city, and the way a Christian church came to be there is here described. No army was concerned, as in the propagation of Mohammedanism—no military operations, no congress of authorities to force things. The only instrumentality in the case was that Paul, a travelling missionary without friends or means, came to the place and *preached.* The great commission which Christ gave to the apostles of His religion was to go and preach the Gospel to every creature. They were to take neither scrip nor sword, but, depending alone upon the truth of their message, to go and tell it everywhere, to every one. The subsequent miraculous calling and appointment of Paul was that he should be a witness—a preacher —of Christ, of those things which he had thus seen and heard, and of what he was subsequently to be shown. To human eyes and calculations this was a very weak and foolish way of undertaking to revolutionize the world or to plant and maintain a king-

dom among and over men. But Christianity from the beginning had nothing else, and has never had any other legitimate means of its extension and perpetuation. Always and everywhere "it has pleased God by the foolishness of *preaching* to save them that believe." From first to last this is the only outward agency and dependency of the Church. If true and faithful *preaching* cannot do the work, nothing else can do it. The whole life-power of Christianity resides in the Word, and goes only where that Word goes. It is by the Word that faith comes. In proportion as the Word clearly sounds into the ears of men right convictions are wrought, hearts won, and the kingdom of salvation advanced.

There is nothing like the true and faithful preaching of the Word. All true Christians are born of the incorruptible seed of the Word. There is no Church, no spiritual life, no salvation, but comes through and rests on the Word. No ceremonies, no symbols, no music, no eloquence, no anything which fails to carry, present, and impress the truth of God on the understandings and hearts of men, can serve to plant, foster, or propagate the religion of Christ. It was the preaching of apostles which did the work at the beginning, and nothing but the continual preaching of the same things can answer now. This made all the Christians and churches in Paul's day, and we shall look in vain for converts to God and success in spiritual things except through the true and faithful preaching of God's Word.

II. Notice the account here given of the contents of apostolic preaching. Paul says it was "*the Gos-*

pel" he had preached to these Corinthians; that is, the glad message, the good news. Mighty events had occurred in Palestine. Heaven had interfered in behalf of the human race in fulfilment of ancient promises and prophecies, and a presentation had been made among the Jewish people for which the ages had waited, and over which all after-time should have reason to be glad. Dim notions of these things had gone out over the world and swept along the northern shores of the Mediterranean, indicating some mighty changes in human relations and hopes. In answer to inquiries thus suggested the early messengers of the Cross had their chief office in telling about "the things which they had seen and heard." And what they thus testified was "*the Gospel*," the joyful message, the glad tidings, which made up the whole burden of apostolic preaching.

Christianity is not a philosophy, not a system of rules and axioms, not speculative and ideal doctrine, but the announcement of certain matters of simple *fact*, out of which flow all its inculcations. These great *facts* are here specifically given. (See verses 3–8.) And they all relate to *a Person*. The central substance of Paul's preaching was "*Christ*." In this respect Christianity differs from all other systems: it centres in the person of its Author, and cannot exist apart from Him. The teachings of Confucius, of Socrates, of Plato, of Aristotle, or of any other teacher, are the same without their authors as with them. We can leave the persons out altogether, forget that they ever lived, and still their systems are the same. It is not so with Christianity. If we

take Christ out of it, it is nothing, and is no longer to be distinguished from other systems of ordinary philosophers. It is the taking of Christ, and what we believe and hold with regard to Christ, that determines whether we are Christians or not. What is announced and testified of Him makes the Gospel, and what we think and hold concerning Him is our acceptance of the Gospel. The centre and substance of the Christian creed is thus made up of the history of *a person*, of one individual person, and that person is Christ. Nor can there be any right preaching, any right Gospel, or any right faith which does not, above all, present and embrace this person and what relates exclusively to Him.

These facts are few and outstanding. A child can comprehend and embrace them. There is *a Christ* —one divinely sent, anointed, and consecrated to be the Saviour of the world. This Christ is Jesus of Nazareth. This Christ died for our sins, was buried, rose again the third day, and lives and reigns for ever as the King and Lord of all who believe in Him. These few items compass the whole story, and in these the whole Gospel consists. They are very compendious, and involve heights and depths which run beyond all human understanding; but they are so few and simple that they can readily be stated in a dozen lines of any ordinary book, and the humblest capacity can take them in as readily as any other facts.

They are also well-authenticated facts. They are not myths and fables, like most of the stories on which other religions are founded. They are what

the sacred Scriptures fore-announced from the creation of the world. From the days of Adam to the advent of Jesus of Nazareth all the holy prophets have been telling of a coming Saviour, who by suffering should overcome the old Serpent and bring redemption unto men. Hence the apostle says: "Christ died for our sins *according to the Scriptures*" —that "he was buried, and rose again the third day *according to the Scriptures*." All the holy books from the beginning attest the Gospel facts, tell what they were to be, and how they should be fulfilled. And that they were all fulfilled in Jesus of Nazareth is attested by eye-witnesses best acquainted with the facts. That He lived and died no one disputed in the times of the apostles. The world was full of testimony on that subject. Had any one contradicted it, witnesses were plenty who had seen Him, heard Him preach, beheld His miracles, experienced His healing power, saw Him led forth, crucified, and dead, and beheld His lifeless body carried to the tomb and sealed up in it. And that He rose again in immortal life, leading captivity captive and fulfilling all that was said of Him and by Him on the subject, is equally attested. He was seen and heard and looked upon and handled again and again by men competent to testify, and who laid down their lives in proof that what they affirmed was true. And these witnesses were many. "He was seen of Cephas (Peter), then of the twelve, after that of about five hundred brethren at once," many of whom still lived when the apostle wrote. "After that He was seen of James, then of all the apostles, and last

of all He was seen of Paul also." Not in some doubtful transient visions only, but "He showed Himself alive after His passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of the apostles forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God" (Acts 1 : 3). And at the last, leading them out through the gates of Jerusalem to the summit of Mount Olivet and conversing with them there, "while they beheld He was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight." If ever historical facts were surely attested, these concerning Christ have been. And these facts are the foundation of the Gospel and the glad substance of all its presentations.

III. Notice the account here given of the aim and intent of the Gospel and of the preaching of it. "*Saved*" is the word given in the text to describe the result meant to be wrought for and in Paul's hearers—"*saved*" from the condemnation and power of sin and from the dominion of the devil. The object for which there is a Christ, for which He died and rose again, and for which the glad tidings concerning Him are propounded and preached, is "*for our sins;* that is, on account of them, for the cancelling of them, for the putting of them away, both as a power to condemn and as a power to pollute and enslave.

Christianity contemplates man as a condemned sinner, for whom there is no possible hope but by means of what it presents. As conscience convicts every one of many a fault and wrong, and God's law pronounces an eternal curse upon all who have

not always perfectly kept it in its every letter and deepest spirit, so every one in the natural course of things is under the curse, from which no works, sacrifices, prayers, or penances of ours can ever deliver us. And it was to take away this curse, to atone for the sins which have brought it upon us, to make satisfaction to the unmet demands of God's holy law, so that guilty mortals might have a way of escape from the dreadful punishments of their crimes, that Jesus came and suffered and died. Hence He Himself said, after His resurrection, that "thus it behooved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day, that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name among all nations" (Luke 24 : 46, 47). In blessed reality, "there is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 8 : 1). In the Gospel facts this putting away of sin, this swallowing up of the penalty of it so as to set us free from it, was accomplished. And this is what the apostle means when he gives it as the primary thing in the Gospel "that Christ died *for our sins* according to the Scriptures." *Atonement*—reconciliation between God and man—was, in his view, the object and end of Christ's death. He preached Christ as an offering for our sins, by which we are delivered from them, and through which reconciliation and eternal life are procured for us. And he did this preaching to make the same a present reality in the hearts and experiences of those who heard him.

Christianity is not a thing for mere contemplative interest. It is a living and effective power. It is a

thing which alters the mind and administrations of God with reference to those whom it reaches. It changes our status in the court and government of Heaven. It procures and secures for the guilty and lost a treatment and portion as though they had never sinned. It completely reverses the doom and destiny of those to whom it comes and for whom it avails. Embracing it, they "*are saved*"—not only will be saved eventually, but *are saved* already, lifted out of their state of condemnation and put under the operations of a renewing power, by which they are also being fashioned in the likeness of their blessed Redeemer.

Not for our entertainment with a touching example of self-denial, tenderness, and love has Christ enacted the story of His sufferings. Not to add agreeableness to an hour or two a week has the preaching of it been ordained, nor yet merely to animate us with generous aims and heroic deeds of self-sacrifice in life. All these go along with the Gospel's intent and aim; but if it goes no farther or achieves no more, it fails of its main purpose, and falls below its own description of itself as pre-eminently and for all time *the Good News* to our perishing race.

The Gospel of the grace of God is a thing which brings salvation—accomplished, effective, present, and everlasting salvation. To this end Jesus was made the Christ. To this end He suffered, died, and rose again. To this end He hath constituted His ministry to testify and proclaim His Name and doings. To this end is all our preaching and your

call to listen to His Word. It is to *save you*—to put away your sins and bury them in the sea, that they may never rise to accuse or harass you any more; to bring you out of the estate of helpless and dying convicts; to give you place and standing as the ransomed children of God; to impart to you the inheritance of the saints. For this is the intent and office of the Gospel and the preaching of it to them that hear it.

IV. Notice the account here given of the practical conditions on which these benefits of the Gospel become ours. Those whom it first saved had to hear it. The apostle had preached the good message, and they listened to it—listened with attentive hearts, listened so as to take it in and understand it. "Faith cometh by hearing," and there can be no salvation by the Gospel where there is no attention to the Gospel. If we are not willing to learn what it propounds to us, it cannot help us. It must be heard; it must be understandingly taken in; it must be listened to, so that we know what it is and what its tidings are. And if people are not willing to give audience to the Gospel, it is impossible that it ever should become to them the glad message which it is. This hearing of the Word to which we invite and urge men is not a thing of mere fashion and ceremony—not a mere Sunday propriety which it is somewhat discreditable to neglect. It is a vital matter. It belongs to the conditions on which God imparts His salvation. To neglect it is to neglect one of the essential means of grace and shut the doors of mercy against ourselves.

But the mere hearing, learning, and understanding of the Gospel tidings is not enough. We may know, and yet our knowledge fail to be of any advantage to us. We may forget it. We may let it lie unused. We may not keep it in mind for any practical purpose. In such case we are as far from the object as if we had never heard at all, and by no means as innocent. The apostle's hearers had to keep in memory the things which he had preached to them. They were not simply to retain the knowledge which he had imparted, but to keep it before them, to have it constantly prominent in their minds, and ever to bear it with them as altogether the most important thing in all their thinking. It was by this means that the truths of the Gospel message were made a living reality to their souls. And so it must be with us.

The story of our redemption by Christ Jesus can never grow old in the hearts and minds of those who really profit by it. They bear it in mind as an ever-fresh thing—as the thing in which they have their constant hope and life. We are always eating, and yet we never tire of that which nourishes us. We come to every new meal with the same relish as before, and feel the importance of providing daily food and of partaking of it. Failing to eat, we soon fail to live. And so Christ and what He has done for us are the daily food of our souls. We must have it every day. We must keep it at hand and hold it fast, that we may ever recur to it and take it up anew. This is what the apostle means by keeping it in memory.

Hence also the importance of the constant repetition of our religious services. It keeps the thing alive in our recollection. It makes us remember again. It renews the whole story, and repossesses us of it, when it otherwise would grow dim and fade away from our minds. It is not so much that we may be taught something new—that we may hear what we have never heard before—that we may be entertained with new sensations; but that we may keep in mind the old—that we may be recalled to what we know already—that we may ever repeat, and by repetition continue, the same activities and affections by which we first took hold of the Gospel. And so it is that we are to fulfil those conditions on which the apostle says we are saved.

It is in this also that faith has its life. Such hearing and attention to the Gospel—such a cherishing of it in our hearts as the Good News to our fallen world—such a keeping of it before our minds as our chief treasure and our only hope—such a standing in it as our only security and salvation,—is *faith*, and by this faith lives and grows.

You see, then, dear friends, the whole system of grace. You see what the Gospel is by which God proposes to save us, and in which alone salvation for men can be found. You see that we still have precisely the same Gospel which Paul preached and the same glad tidings in which he taught his hearers to believe and hope. You see how it came to avail for them, and how alone it can avail for us. You see how it must be treated, and how we need to demean ourselves toward it, that it may be to us the power

of God and the wisdom of God unto salvation. And thus you see, too, what blessed opportunities we all have, for to us is the Gospel preached as well as to others.

Brethren, let us see to it that we receive not this precious grace of God in vain. For if we receive this, and stand in it, and keep it in mind as our hope and trust in life and in death, then are we saved, our sins are cancelled, our God is reconciled, our judgment is past, our prospects are sure, and eternal life is ours. Otherwise there is no hope for us. If we would get fast hold on God and a blessed eternity we must believe in Jesus and take His Word. If we would ever master sin, adversity, and death, we must betake ourselves to Jesus, rest on His achievements, and hold firmly to His help and grace. For only as we keep in memory what His apostles have preached to us, and cleave to the same in living faith, is salvation ours.

Twelfth Sunday after Trinity.

2 Cor. 3:4–11: And such trust have we through Christ to Godward: not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God; who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life.

But if the ministration of death, written and engraven in stones, was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not steadfastly behold the face of Moses for the glory of his countenance; which glory was to be done away: how shall not the ministration of the Spirit be rather glorious? For if the ministration of condemnation be glory: much more doth the ministration of righteousness exceed in glory.

For even that which was made glorious had no glory in this respect, by reason of the glory that excelleth.

For if that which is done away was glorious, much more that which remaineth is glorious.

WHEN the apostle here speaks of Godwardness, he describes a something to which every human being has been created, and which in some form or other is to be found in every one that lives. Man is a religious being, and cannot help himself against a certain religious sense which more or less affects him and influences his feelings and his life. Whatever his profession may be, there is inwrought with the very texture of his existence some motion or reference or instinct of a divine existence—a superior power. He may say there is no God, but his very saying so proves that there has been stir and activity in his soul about

God, and every day he lives he still practically contradicts what he theoretically professes. In reality, there is no such thing as atheism in man, and cannot be. Let men do or say what they please, there still is in them and in all their doings what blankly contradicts their vaunted unbelief.

> Whoever plants a leaf beneath the sod,
> And waits to see it push away the clod,
> He trusts in God.
> Whoever says, when clouds are in the sky,
> "Be patient, heart, light breaketh by and by,"
> Trusts the Most High.
> Whoever sees 'neath winter's field of snow
> The silent harvest of the future grow,
> God's power doth know.
> Whoe'er lies down upon his couch to sleep,
> Content to lock each sense in slumber deep,
> Feels God will keep.
> Whoever says, "To-morrow," "The Unknown,"
> "The Future," trusteth to that Power alone
> He dares disown.

And, loudly atheistic as any one may be, there still remains a certain taking for granted that there is a God, and ample manifestation that the soul was made to trust in Him.

To guide and help and satisfy this native God-wardness, and to make it the intended element of our happiness and eternal salvation, the eternal Father has vouchsafed a revelation to man, making known Himself and His will, and instituting methods for the exercise and cultivation of this affection. He has spoken to our race, shown His wonders, indicated the sort of being He is, and made known what pleases Him, and how man may best order himself

with reference to Him. "At sundry times and in divers manners" have these communications been made, and are still making.

But the two pre-eminent presentations which have thus come forth from the Deity, and essentially comprehending and interpreting all others, are those which are mainly referable to two sources—*the Law* and *the Gospel;* the one through Moses and the prophets, and the other through Jesus Christ and His commissioned apostles.

These were the two noblest systems of Godwardness upon earth at the time the apostle wrote. Both were from God; both were glorious; both were effective as regarded the ends for which they were instituted; and in reality both were only different stages or sections in the one great revelation of God for human salvation. Truly considered, they are not at all antagonistic, and never were meant to be. The giving of the Law had reference to another dispensation to come, and the Gospel assumes the Law and fulfils it. They are two correlated pieces of one great whole.

It appears, however, that certain Jewish teachers of the apostle's time made a point against the Gospel that it cast contempt upon the dignity and glory of the Law, depreciated Moses and his institutes, and hence was to be withstood as a false Godwardness. The divinity of the Law was admitted. Moses was regarded on all hands as a superlatively inspired man, and his teachings as of God. The evidence to the Jew on this point was overwhelming, and constituted the very root and life of all his national and

religious distinction and glory. And as the Gospel seemed to make so little of many of the institutes and observances of the Law, this was thought to be a valid reason for refusing that liberty which Paul and his followers claimed. And it is this point, the relative worth and glory of the earlier and the later dispensations, or *the superiority of the Gospel over the Law as the true and proper Godwardness for man*, that the apostle here discusses.

Notice, then, a few of the leading particulars.

I. *The Law was "letter," the Gospel is "spirit."* We here understand the Law in so far as the Jews opposed it to the Gospel, for the Law had a spirit too, and one quite in accord with the Gospel. It is the Law as a system of religious observances—the Law as an external economy of religion and life—that the Jews opposed to Christianity and that the apostle here treats of—the Law as mixed up with meats and drinks and divers washings, with keeping of Sabbaths, new moons, and all the details of the Jewish ceremonies. This the apostle says was "*letter*"—not in a sense as though the Gospel were not also a thing of sacred record and formulated directions and instructions, or as though the Gospel takes for itself only the general mind and bearing of God's Word without regard to specific things, but "*letter*" in the sense of being outward, formal, having reference to external life and observances, belonging to the mere bodily shape and alphabet of religion.

The old economy belongs to the comparative childhood of the race, when primers and pictures

and addresses to the outward senses were required in order to lead on to something better. When people become mature they think more; their world is more inward; they are moved by convictions and impulses from within, rather than from mere impressions from without. Hence the Jewish system was intensely what we might call *sensuous*. Its appeals were to the senses. Its institutes and directions emphasized external matters—rested on places, on imposing offices, on things of bodily performance. And but few in the apostles' time, or yet among those who held to the Law, ever came farther than this ceremonial and mere external observance. If they did not outwardly violate the Ten Commandments, attended to the distinctions of meats and days, and observed the rites of their religion, they considered their righteousness complete, and everything fulfilled on which to claim the divine favor and eternal life. It is plainly to be seen how all this was a Godwardness only of *the letter*.

In comparison with such a system the Gospel is not letter, but "*spirit*." It looks not so much to the outward deed or conduct as to the condition and temper of the heart. It has outward rites and observances too. It has its Lord's Day, its preaching of the Word, its assemblies for worship, and its sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper; but it locates no worth in any of them as an acceptable or saving thing, save as the heart is moved and takes in that of which these things are the mere shells and vehicles.

The glory of Christianity is that it takes hold on

the heart, renews the spirit of the man's mind, changes the inner impulses and aims of the nature and makes him spiritually a new creature. Its Sunday is nothing except as a time spiritually appropriated for the instruction and edification of the soul. Its worship is not a periodical going up to Jerusalem or Gerizim, there to discharge certain formal duties, but it is a worship in spirit and in truth, the believing and obedient adoration of the heart, for which any place and any time will answer. It takes the Law in its application to the soul, to the thoughts of the heart, and as wholly broken if not in every particular fulfilled in the activities of the inner man no matter how fully the outward letter has been kept. It allows of no saintship by mere external obedience or by mere negative virtues, or by anything but by the effectual working of the Spirit of God upon the heart and the inward realization of all that it propounds. A man may spend days and nights going through forms of prayer; he may keep Sabbaths and holy days with Pharisaic precision; he may read the Scriptures till he has committed them all to memory; he may attend with utmost punctiliousness to every outward act of religion; he may be morally pure, generous, correct, and praiseworthy in his behavior; but so long as it is only letter, form, ceremony, outwardness, it is not a right ground for Christian hope and salvation. There must be a soul in it, a heart that takes hold on Christ, an inward faith and love joining the man in spirit to his God or the whole thing fails. The Law was letter, but the Gospel is spirit.

II. *The Law kills, the Gospel makes alive.* The Law is in itself holy and good. It expresses the mind of God, and there is nothing required by it but what it is the interest of man to do. Indeed, there could be nothing more blessed for our world than for every one fully to keep the Ten Commandments. For those who do truly and fully keep the Law the greatest favors of its great Author are pledged. The Gospel itself can offer no higher good than that which the Law propounds to those who keep the Law. In this sense it is no more killing or murderous to human peace than the Gospel. But the trouble is that no man has ever kept the Law, or can keep it. Outwardly, men may keep it, but, taken in its true spirituality, there is not a breathing mortal but has broken every precept a hundred times over, and is in the miserable plight of not being able to live without breaking it. And to every transgressor who at any time or in any particular has violated this Law, it preaches only condemnation and death. The proclaiming of it to the guilty world is therefore nothing more nor less than the proclamation of a divine death-sentence upon it. The Law knows of no mercy for sinners. It convicts of sin, but it has no salvation for those who stand thus convicted. "*The soul that sinneth, it shall die*" (Ezek. 18 : 4) is the sum and end of the whole matter as respects the Law. It has nothing but death for the guilty. Its rigid demands kill out every possible hope for the sinner so long as he looks to it for salvation. He may struggle as he pleases; he may reform and change his life all he can; he may torture

himself with penances and prayers; but with all that he can do he is under a condemnation which he can by no means work himself from under, for "*by the deeds of the Law there shall no flesh be justified*" (Rom. 3 : 20). To a sinful world it is simply and only "a ministration of death"—a form of the divine manifestation which can give us nothing but despair and everlasting punishment, for the simple reason that we have not kept, and cannot keep, those requirements or conditions on which alone it promises life. It is good and holy in itself, and a blessed thing for those who have kept it, but for sinners it is a deadly ministration which takes away all peace and kills for ever.

But the Gospel is a different ministration. It gives life. It offers hope and salvation even to the worst of sinners and the weakest of men. It does not propose to overthrow the Law, for in that case God would contradict Himself. It does not make void the Law, but establishes it, holds it to be good and true, honors it as the holy and necessary expression of God's holy government, and founds its offers on a perfect fulfilment of it. Only, the fulfilment on which its offers are made is not a fulfilment by the works, reforms, and prayers of the sinner, but by a Mediator and Substitute, who takes the sinner's place, satisfies its demands for him, and propounds a free justification from all its penalties on simple faith in that Mediator. It presents the perfect and holy Christ Jesus, Son of God and Son of man, as having undertaken our case, fulfilled the Law as our Head and Representative, borne our sins in His own body

on the cross, and brought in a sufficient and everlasting righteousness, on which God can be just and yet justify the ungodly. It preaches condemnation of the guilty just as well as the Law, but that condemnation taken away through the death and resurrection of our Saviour, and our salvation sure just as we accept, trust, and follow Him. We have not now first to work out a perfect righteousness by our own fulfilling of the Law; for Christ has fulfilled it for us, and all its power to harm and condemn is taken away in what He did and suffered for us, so that we need only believe in Him in order to have a standing before God as if we had never sinned at all. Though we be sinners, and cannot stand a single day or hour in our own righteousness, the Gospel still brings us hope and confidence through Jesus Christ, whom it holds forth as our all-sufficient Saviour. It thus becomes to us "the ministration of righteousness," where the Law alone could be nothing but "the ministration of condemnation and death."

There are three forms of life ministered by the Gospel, just as there are three forms of death ministered by the Law. First, it ministers absolution and reprieve from the sentence of death, which the Law justly pronounces; second, it quickens us again unto righteousness from that death to spiritual things which our sins had induced; and third, it ministers peace and confidence to the distressed soul conscious of its weaknesses and departures from God. In other words, it ministers life to the Law, life to spiritual things, and life of hope and well-grounded anticipation of everlasting life; it gives justification, re-

newal unto holiness, and everlasting peace and salvation. "What the Law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God, sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh," has wrought out for us; and the same it is the office of the Gospel to minister to us. It is *life*.

III. *The Law makes everything depend on man; the Gospel makes everything depend on Christ.* To be justified by the Law we must be able to go the whole length of a complete obedience to every one of its precepts every moment that we live. This is the one only condition on which honor and blessing can come through the Law. All rests on this, that man's strength and faithfulness shall not flag or falter day nor night for ever. Alas for the hopes that have no foundation but this! But the Gospel rests nothing on the strength or sufficiency of man. It takes the sinner as a poor crushed reed, limp, helpless, and unable of himself to stand upright. It sees in him nothing but deficiency, infirmity, and utter disability. It hopes for nothing from any sufficiency in him. It proposes everything through Christ, for Christ's sake and in the virtue of His ability to save. All Christian hope and trust is "not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think anything as of ourselves, but our sufficiency is of God," and our Godward trusting is "through Christ," and through Him alone. He is the Christian's sufficiency—his "wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption." All hope from the Gospel rests entirely upon the perfect sufficiency of Jesus Christ, and nothing whatever upon man's ability or doings.

IV. *The Law was glorious, but the Gospel is more glorious.* It is no part of Christianity to detract from the glory of the Law. Though a ministration of death by reason of man's fault and weakness, the apostle says it "was glorious." God gave it amid mighty signs and wonders indicative of the solemn sacredness in which He held it. His own hands engraved it on tables of stone. It is a perfect transcript of His own mind and attributes with regard to the relations and duties of man. It is His great and potent instrument whereby to convince and convict "of sin, righteousness, and judgment to come."

Great wonders accompanied the giving of the Law, itself the crown of a great succession of wonders. The mountain burned with mysterious fires, echoed with unearthly thunders, and shook with unwonted tremors. The man who bore it down to the waiting camp was permitted to commune face to face with God till his face glowed and shone with sacred splendors too terrible for the people to endure to look upon. A magnificent series of scenes and ceremonies were divinely instituted for its ministrations. A temple of golden grandeur was arranged for it to repose in; an august and imposing priesthood was organized to minister before the ark which contained it; and annual convocations of the whole house of Israel were instituted, and grand assemblies with trumpets and psalmody the sublimest on earth. Around it clustered the most noble intellects and the most highly gifted among men—Solomon with his philosophic wisdom, David with his lofty poetry, Isaiah with his splendid eloquence, Ezekiel with his

gorgeous pictures, Jeremiah with his melting plaintiveness, and hundreds more of noble spirits, the glory of their age and the most honored among men. Nor can any one truly sum up the records in the case without consenting with our apostle that the Law was "glorious."

But with all this sublime array the Gospel is "more glorious." It comes from the same glorious God. It comes to accomplish what the Law had no power to effect. It is delivered through a more splendid Mediator. Moses was a mere man, however highly favored; Jesus is both God and man. Moses was a mere servant; Jesus is God's own coequal Son. Moses was imperfect and sinful; Jesus is holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners. Moses' face shone with unearthly brightness; Jesus shone all over with a brightness like the sun, which no veil could cover, and which transfigured all his raiment also. Moses wrought many miracles, but none so great and astounding as some wrought by Christ. The earthly elements responded to the word of Moses; the stars of the sky, the sun at midday, and angels of heaven responded to the life-facts of Jesus. The glory of the Law was one to astound the outward senses; the glory of the Gospel is one to touch and quicken the heart. The glory of the Law is one of terribleness and fear to man; the glory of the Gospel is one to draw, to soothe, to comfort, and to bless. The glory of the Law is the glory of imperial authority and wrath; the glory of the Gospel is the glory of tenderness, of sympathy, and of love. The glory of the Law was killing to the peace and

hopes of man; the glory of the Gospel is that of resurrection and healing. The glory of the Law as embodied in the Jewish ceremonial was temporary, and meant to be superseded by a new and better economy. It was to grow old and pass away; the glory of the Gospel is that final, complete, and abiding thing for which the Law was the forerunner, the preparation, and the servant. The institutes of the Law are to the Gospel only as the moonlight to the sunshine, or the twilight of morning to the perfect day. And though we have no tables of divine engraving upon stone, we have the more enduring tables of God's engraving in the life-letters of the heart and mind. Though we have no such temple as made Jerusalem a praise, we have one built up of "living stones," wearing a radiance outshining golden spires and gilded domes, and furnishing a securer sanctuary than Jerusalem's hallowed walls. And though we have no visible Shekinah hovering in fiery cloud over the mercy-seat, we may come with boldness into the holiest of all, carry the Holy Ghost in our very bodies, and find each spot an entrance into heaven.

Here, then, my friends, is the proper, soul-satisfying, and only saving Godwardness. Left to ourselves, we can only waste and perish in our own impurities. With no hope but that which the Law brings us, we are loaded with a task which we never can perform, and under which we must sink in everlasting despair. But it is our privilege to know of another and a better way. He who spake in time past to the fathers by

the prophets hath in these last days spoken unto us by *His Son.*

By His Son! And that tells a story of grace which throws everything else in the shade. To send us a message of judgment for our sins, to show us our ill estate, and preach to us the condemnation we deserve, God does not need to commission His Son. Any servant, angel, or man may answer for that. Even our own consciences can do it, and do it well. But when the only-begotten *Son* is sent, it must mean something which no mere servant could bring and what no system of laws could work, even our spiritual and eternal salvation. And so it is written, "God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be *saved.*" Having borne our sins in His own body on the tree, He hath now become the Captain of salvation to bring many sons to glory. It matters not how ignorant we are, He is our wisdom; or how weak we are, He is our strength; or how sinful we are, He is our righteousness; or how much the Law or conscience may have whereby to accuse us, He is our defender and all-sufficient deliverer. Condemned by the Law we have broken, we are justified by His glorious satisfaction. Once dead in trespasses and in sins, through Him we are quickened to newness of life and made the living temples of a new and better sanctification working itself out into life everlasting. We can want for nothing higher. There can come nothing further. The final goal is reached in Jesus Christ.

And here it was that the apostle rested with all

confidence. "Such trust have we through Christ to Godward;" "Our sufficiency is of God, not of ourselves." These were his triumphant expressions. And to this it is meant that we all may come, having the same faith, staying ourselves in the same trust, and hoping for the favor, blessing, and eternal salvation of God—in no works of ours, in no ceremonials however sacred, but alone in the merit and sufficiency of our blessed Lord Jesus Christ. This is faith. This is the religion of the Gospel. This is the only saving Godwardness.

In all our way through life the Gospel sheds
Its kind and healing beams o'er all our woes;
And when our days are done, it lights the path
That leads us on to brighter, happier scenes;
And it will live and shine when all beside
Has perished.

Thirteenth Sunday after Trinity.

GAL. 3 : 15–22 : Brethren, I speak after the manner of men Though it be but a man's covenant, yet if it be confirmed, no man disannulleth or addeth thereto.

Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ.

And this I say, That the covenant that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect.

For if the inheritance be of the law, it is no more of promise: but God gave it to Abraham by promise.

Wherefore then serveth the law? It was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made; and it was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator.

Now, a mediator is not a mediator of one; but God is one.

Is the law then against the promises of God? God forbid: for if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law.

But the Scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe.

WHEN Lot's wife was called to go forth out of Sodom, though pressed on peril of her life, she looked back in fond longing for the possessions she was leaving. When Israel came out of Egypt, with the perils of the sea all safely passed and the Promised Land almost in

sight, many still lusted after the fleshpots they had left, and murmuringly wished themselves back. And so when the dispensation of Gospel liberty dawned upon our afflicted race, with all the sublime promises which it brings to man, there were some whose hearts and minds still reverted to the old temple with its feasts and ceremonies, did all they could to perpetuate the former bondage, and thought themselves happiest in the economy whose day was passed. Their carnal minds were not content with the simplicities of the evangelic faith, and could not be at rest with nothing but the spiritual treasures of the new dispensation. They were also very persistent in their demands for the circumcision of all that believed, and were not willing to allow the genuine apostleship of any one who did not side with them in these things. They even withstood the great apostle Paul himself, and sought to alienate from him and his teachings all whom they could influence in the churches which he had formed.

It was to meet these murmuring aliens, and to maintain his own apostleship and the grand freedom of the Gospel of Christ against such disabling intermixtures, that Paul wrote this noble Epistle to the Galatians. And the sum of the doctrine which he propounds and defends is that which we find stated in the last verse of the text,—to wit, that "the Scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe."

In meditating upon these presentations, I find four particulars to be considered :

I. An Imprisonment without Exception;
II. A Ransom without Limitation;
III. A Requirement without Variation;
IV. A Blessedness without Defalcation.

And may God in His goodness help us to take ir the subject to our special edification!

I. An Imprisonment without Exception.

The word *concluded*, as that which it is meant tc translate, here means *shut up*, as in a locked and guarded prison-house. In this sense it is used in Romans (11 : 32), where it is said, "God hath concluded [*shut up*] all in unbelief, that He might have mercy upon all." As a man shuts up his cattle in an enclosure from which they cannot escape, so the idea is that people are shut up with regard to the matter here treated. Here, then, is an *imprisonment.*

That which constitutes the hold or enclosure in this case is *sin*, which is here said to take in *all*, both Jew and Gentile, and so the whole race of man. It is therefore an imprisonment *without exception.* The idea is not that there are no differences among men, that no one is any better than another, that all are alike in their moral character, or that some are not much nearer to what they ought to be than others. This would be a contradiction of plain facts, and a thing which could not be affirmed as the teaching of the Scriptures. Everywhere we read of some who are very lovable and very near to the kingdom of heaven; and of others who are very brutish, repulsive, and far gone in the most offensive wickedness

The meaning is not that the strict Jew had not many things far above the idolatrous heathen, or that the inoffensive and confiding child is nothing better than the man who has grown gray in all sorts of villainy. But still, though people are not all steeped in sin and guilt to the same extent, the teaching here is that every one is touched by sin, under the influence of it, and held by it as in a prison, from which no one can escape by his own efforts or righteousness.

That this is the teaching of the Scriptures the apostle here affirms; and we can easily see for ourselves that this is the fact. If we go to the Psalms, we find it there written that the Lord looked down from heaven upon the children of men and found that "they are all gone aside, they are altogether become filthy, there is none that doeth good, no, not one" (Ps. 14 : 1–3). And so the apostle John also writes: "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us" (John 1 : 8).

And what the Scriptures thus declare is attested by all right conscience and reason. No one can look at the law and not feel his mouth stopped from all self-justification, or without realizing that "all the world is guilty before God." And if all be not sinners, wherefore, then, do all die? Death could only come by sin, and if all die, as we see they do, then must all be sinners. It is impossible to construe death in any other way. And as the most innocent of babes and the most virtuous and honorable of men are still liable to death, all must be implicated in the judgment and penalty of sin. And whence are all those fears and misgivings which more or less

disturb every heart in every serious moment, if not from an inner consciousness of guilt and unpreparedness for strict inquisition?

Wherever there is a conscience we find it more or less burdened with self-accusations. But whether men feel and admit it or not, there is no one living who is not a sinner before God. In every possible form God tells us so. And it is the same, no matter what our blood or breeding, sex or age. For the Scripture holdeth this whole earthly universe of things in ward, shut up under the bonds and imprisonment of sin, against which we are as helpless as an infant in a giant's arms. We may be sorry, but it will not help us. We may offer sacrifices, devote ourselves to prayers, observe fasts, Sabbaths, and new moons; we may reform, and change, and even give the fruit of our body for the sin of our soul; but it can be of no avail. The walls of the prison are round about us all, and no man living, by any plea or strength that originates with him, can ever get out. Judaism, as such, with all its imposing ceremonials is just as impotent here as the abominations of the heathen. It matters not who we are, where we are, or what we are, the fact remains the same that we are all included under sin, and held in ward by it beyond all possibility of escape by any efforts that lie within mere human power.

But along with this imprisonment the text speaks of

II. A Ransom without Limitation.

The apostle refers to a promise in Jesus Christ going into effect from and through Him—a promise

involving deliverance from this stronghold in which sin has incarcerated us. If it be a promise which any one of these prisoners of sin can confidently take hold of, it must needs be as wide-reaching as the entire congregation of those to whom it is offered. If it be for some prisoners only, then no one can take sure comfort from it, seeing that he cannot be certain that he is not one of those left out and passed by. As to its virtue and availability, therefore, the ransom is coextensive with the imprisonment—a ransom without limitation.

We hold to no partial atonement, dear friends, as the apostle Paul did not. In his second letter to the Corinthians he argues the absolute universality of sin, from the fact that "*Christ died for all*," and in the same connection gives it as an argument for the repentance of every one that lives that "*Christ died for all.*" He writes it to Timothy as one of the fundamental articles of his Gospel that "the man Christ Jesus gave Himself a ransom *for all.*" He declares to the Hebrews that "Jesus was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, that He by the grace of God should taste death *for every man.*" So John also writes to all Christians that "Christ is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the sins of *the whole world.*" And so, by virtue of the remedy provided for sin, the book of Inspiration to its last words tells of the Gospel invitation *to all*, and says, "Let him that heareth say, Come; *and whosoever will*, let him take the water of life freely." Yea, if there is one thing clearly made out in the Scriptures, it is this, that

when the apostle speaks of "the promise by faith of Jesus Christ" to an entire world shut up in sin, he means to set forth a Ransom without a limitation.

There be those, unfortunately, who tread under foot the Son of God and count the blood of the covenant an unholy thing; but it is not because that blood was not shed for them, nor yet that there is not virtue in it for their salvation. Even for those who never get out of the prison-house of their condemnation, and rot for ever in their sins, Christ died, and paid a ransom in His blood. Nay, the particular guilt and condemnation under the New Testament is not that men are sinners under the Law, but that they reject and refuse the free and full redemption which has been provided in Christ Jesus. The Physician is at hand, but they will not have Him. He that hath the keys of death and of hell stands ready to turn the bolts and throw open the prison-doors—nay, hath already unlocked them, broken them down, and, like another Samson, borne them quite away; but, like idiots and hallucinated madmen, they will not avail themselves of His aid or come forth through the doors He has opened. Our plain and distinct commission is, to proclaim liberty to the captives and the opening of the prison-doors to them that are bound, on the basis of an unlimited Ransom paid down for them on Calvary. If any are not delivered, it is not because their old sins have not been cancelled, not because a free and full exoneration for all their crimes has not been wrought out on their behalf, but because they themselves refuse to be delivered in this way, and hug their chains in

preference to an embrace of their glorious Redeemer. And what I have to say to all who hear me this day, and to every one whom my words can reach, is, that there is no need for any one to wear any longer the bonds or condemnation of sin, for God hath found a Ransom in Christ Jesus, and that Ransom is unlimited.

But along with this proclamation a condition is laid down. Hence we have

III. A Requirement without Variation.

The promise is "*by faith* of Christ Jesus," and is made availing only "*to them that believe*." The whole efficacy of the Gospel to them that hear it hangs on this one simple condition. If any one wishes to know what he shall do to work the works of God, the answer is from Christ Himself: "*This is the work of God, that ye believe on Him whom God hath sent*" (John 6 : 28, 29); "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life; and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him" (John 3 : 36). If people will not believe our message, take it to their hearts, accept of Christ, and trust in Him for salvation, there is no hope for them. This is the plain, reasonable, and necessary requirement, and it admits of no variation. It is absolute. It is unchangeable. Into all the world and to every creature is the Gospel message sent: "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not" remains to perish with the greater condemnation, in that he hath rejected the redemption that is offered to him.

Nor is it necessary to enter upon an elaborate disquisition to show what faith is. I believe that it has been more obscured, encumbered, and disabled by theological explanations and discussions than it has ever been advantaged by them. It is a plain matter for plain minds, which the Scriptures assume to be of such easy comprehension and exercise that they scarcely ever stop to make so much as an observation concerning it, save to announce it as the thing whereby a sinner takes and holds and rests on what the Gospel message brings. When something is told us, and we take it as true and direct our way accordingly, we exercise faith with regard to that piece of information. And when the Gospel is made known to us, offering us a present and almighty Saviour, and telling us that He has died for us, borne our sins in His own body on the tree, cancelled them all in His most precious blood, and now has all things in His hands to administer eternal salvation to every one that accepts Him and comes under His standard,—if we take the thing as true, and act accordingly, *we have faith*, and therein do exercise it unto salvation. It is not necessary to go into the chemistry of our food in order to live by it, and so it is not necessary to go into a metaphysical analysis of our faith in order to have it or to know whether we believe or not. The Gospel is a plain and simple message from God, and when we take Him at His Word, and credit and act on what He therein tells us, we exercise faith and fulfil the one only condition on which our personal salvation hangs.

The apostle says that "faith is the substance of

things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." And what does he mean by this but that faith in the Gospel message is that act of heart and mind by which the Gospel promises are taken as reality, so that, although we cannot see Christ and heaven, it is yet the same to us as if we had them visible to our eyes. Of course, if we treat the Gospel message as mere myth and fable or as having no truth in it, we do not believe. So, also, if we say that we believe it and yet do not order ourselves accordingly, we do not really believe, because it fails to be a living and influential reality to us. In one sense we may not doubt it; but, still, if we do not allow it practically to control us or do not order ourselves according to what it tells us, we cannot be said to believe it. There may be something of faith even where people fail to obey the Gospel, but a faith which does not set us to act according to the Gospel is a *dead* faith, of no worth, because it does not realize the things to which it assents nor evidence them in our feelings and activities. But when we take God at His word, accept what He preaches to us in the Gospel, act on it as the truth, and repose our hopes on it as a living reality, we are believers, and all that the Gospel offers and proclaims thereby becomes ours. Just as we believe the word of the physician and take the medicine which he says will cure us, so we believe the word of the Gospel, take what it prescribes, and trust for the salvation which it promises. And that simple faith is the one only instrument by which the whole redemption wrought by Christ is made ours and rendered availing to us,

without another thing either going before or following after.

But without this believing of the Gospel there is no salvation. It is the one unvarying and unalterable requirement. To them that *believe* is the promise by faith of Jesus Christ given, and to none others. This cuts off the pagan, the Mohammedan, the Jew, the infidel, and all among us who turn their backs upon the Christian institutes; for they do not accept Christ for their Saviour, and disdain to obey Him as their hope of eternal life.

But the text has a still further implication to the effect that where this requirement is fulfilled there is

IV. A Blessedness without Defalcation.

It matters not who the person may be or where he may be, it matters not in what guilt he has been steeped or how terrible is the condemnation which he has merited, if he believes the word of the Gospel message and takes it to his soul as a veritable word of God to him, and rests now on Jesus Christ as his Lord and hope, the promise by faith of that Saviour is his, and nothing can deprive him of the glorious possession. Christ's achievements and everything which Christ promises to them that receive Him are made over to him by a covenant which cannot be broken, and with a certainty which cannot possibly fail.

Is he a sinner? Christ has brought in an everlasting righteousness to cover all his crimes, and has set up an economy of means and administrations whereby to renew that perverse nature and ever more and more cleanse and sanctify it.

Is he justly condemned by the law and his own conscience? Christ has satisfied all the demands of the law, paid the debt, and pleads with the disconsolate soul to believe that there is now no more condemnation, that God is reconciled, and that he has nothing more to fear if only he will believe it.

Is he still beset with weaknesses and temptations, and, contrary to his will and wish, continually falling into sin and coming short of strict holiness? Christ's blood avails for the whole life and for all defects—for the infirmities of the present and future as well as for the guilt of the past. He ever lives as our Advocate and Surety in heaven, never ceasing to intercede for His people, and silencing all accusers by the exhaustless merit of His blood.

Is the believer still a child of sorrow, suffering, and conflict, subject to disease and death? All things have been put into Christ's hands as the Head of His Church, as well the ills of life and death as anything else, and His solemn covenant is that He will overrule them all so as to take out of them every harmful and unbearable sting, and make them work out for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.

All this the apostle most beautifully sets forth where he says, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea, rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or fam-

ine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us" (Rom. 8 : 33–37).

But these are only the beginnings and preparatives of the blessedness pertaining to them that believe—the earthly sproutings of the seed which are to eventuate in eternal harvests. Jesus Himself says: "This is the will of Him that sent Me, that every one that seeth the Son, and believeth on Him, may have everlasting life; and I will raise him up at the last day" (John 6 : 40); "In My Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also" (John 14 : 2, 3). And so it has been the privilege and consolation of all believers to say, "We know that if the earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens" (2 Cor. 5 : 1); "We shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump; for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. Then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory" (1 Cor. 15 : 51–54).

These are glorious hopes, over and over announced and covenanted to them that believe. They all belong to "the promise by faith of Jesus Christ." They take in all eternity with all its blessedness.

And they shall all be fulfilled in due time without defalcation. What stronger security could be given than that which we have? "God, willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed it by an oath: that by two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us" (Heb. 6:17, 18). That God forgives and accepts us at all is an ample pledge that He will fulfil all the rest. "He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?" (Rom. 8:32). And what is there to hinder it? The law cannot; the devil cannot; sin cannot; death cannot; angels, principalities, and powers cannot; things present cannot; things to come cannot; height cannot; depth cannot; and no creature in being can. The blessedness is without defalcation.

Brethren, I thank God from my deepest soul that I am privileged to be the bearer of such tidings to you. It is not a pleasant thing to have to tell people that they are sinners, wicked sinners, far worse sinners in the eye of God than they think they are—that every one richly deserves everlasting punishment, and is actually held under imprisonment to eternal death, from which no one can by any means of his own escape. But to be able at the same time to preach a Ransom which has no limit, a Ransom which sets for ever free and entitles to eternal place and regency in heaven, available to each on the simple and easy terms of faith in the glorious proclama-

tion, is an honor and a blessedness which angels might well covet. And yet what can it all avail if you disbelieve it, or turn your backs upon it, or admit it with your heads only to neglect and reject it with your lives? What is all the beauty and glory of the words if people will not take them to their souls and answer to the message they bring? How can our preaching profit if men let it pass over them like a pleasant song, which leaves no traces on their hearts and works no changes in their ways?

O man! O woman! hear, that your soul may live! Imprisoned in your sins, behold your only Ransom, and embrace it. You have listened to the Gospel many a time, and dwelt with fondness on its blessedness, and oft have comforted yourself with contemplation of its joyous hopes; but have you practically accepted it? You do not question the truth of it, but have you enlisted under its banner, put on its badge, and set to the drill-work for entry upon its promises? Blessed are the ears that hear and the eyes that see such golden opportunities as now are yours; and I beseech of you let them not go by unimproved.

Fourteenth Sunday after Trinity.

GAL. 5 : 16–24 : This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh.

For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh : and these are contrary the one to the other ; so that ye cannot do the things that ye would.

But if ye be led by the Spirit, ye are not under the law.

Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these, adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like : of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance : against such there is no law.

And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh, with the affections and lusts.

TRUE Christians are "a peculiar people." They live a peculiar life. They live to laws and are governed by views, affections, and aims which do not exist in other people. They "live in the Spirit." They have been reborn to a divine power and made alive to spiritual realities to which others are inanimate and dead. The Spirit of God, through the Word of truth, has touched and renewed the springs of their being. The truth of God has come into their souls, lifted them out of their old indifference and lethargy,

awakened them to sacred things, and quickened them to a new sort of endeavor and life. And so far as people are true Christians they are "new creatures"—the same men and women, indeed, but made alive in new matters which now take the pre-eminence in all their thoughts and aims. They also have come into new relations, and enjoy a different standing before God. They now are citizens of another kingdom; they obey a new authority; they serve another Lord; and they embody a new life. The transformation may be less distinct and thorough in some than in others; but in all God's accepted children there is an answer to His will and promptings which places them in another company, under another standard, and starts them in new directions and activities. They are alive to the Spirit.

Such a new life necessitates also a new *walk*. If men are alive to the Spirit, the same shows itself in their temper and behavior. Everything that lives puts forth according to its own nature; and if spiritual life exists it must put forth according to its own peculiar nature. No man can "live to the Spirit" and yet walk according to the flesh. What the nature is, that the motions and affections of the being must show. Thorns do not produce grapes, nor thistles figs, but each nature puts itself forth in its own peculiar way and proper products. Therefore, if we are in and of the Spirit, created anew to spiritual life, it pertains to that life to resist and withstand the old carnal nature, so as not to fulfil the lusts of the flesh.

In dwelling a little upon this spiritual style of life,

which the Epistle of to-day describes, three things are to be considered:

I. What it Excludes;
II. What it Includes;
III. What it Concludes.

And may God help us to look at the matter as the seriousness of the subject demands!

I. First, then, as to what "walk in the Spirit" *excludes*.

The apostle enumerates a long list of things which he calls "the works of the flesh," or those ill fruits which pertain to the natural man and which "the lusts of the flesh" produce. He does not charge every one with being actually guilty of all the bad things named, but he gives a catalogue of vices and crimes the seeds of which we all by birth and blood have in us, ready to be developed into every ugliness. It is against the breaking forth of these that every Christian is called to guard and strive. They are at variance with life to the Spirit, and contrary to a proper Christian walk. In other words, a spiritual life *excludes them*. They are of several classes or groups.

1. *Sensualities* are named and condemned as the things incompatible with a walk according to the Spirit. "Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness" are among the most fleshly of sins, and are so against the common sense of decency and right that it requires no argument to prove that Christian life cannot coexist with them. They are among the things excluded.

2. *Unlawful dealings in things spiritual* are likewise named and condemned as belonging to the fleshly and unhallowed life. Even the carnal man sometimes undertakes spiritual things; and hence we have "idolatry and witchcraft"—that is, the setting up for God what is not God—the false worship even of the true God, the following of lying oracles and doctrines of demons, and secret tamperings with evil or familiar spirits.

Everything divine has its counterfeits. The world has ever been full of false gods, false worships, and of oracles and communications not from the Holy Ghost. The worshippers of self, Mammon, or nature; the frequenters and supporters of false churches which repudiate the distinguishing truths of God's Word, substitute reason for faith, and deny the only Lord God that bought them; Spiritualists, seeking out dark places for light, consulting the dead for their religious doctrines, and directing their lives by the counsels of familiar spirits; and the workers of wonders by the aid of demons and charms; conjurers, fortune-tellers, and pretenders to supernatural wisdom,—are but doers and followers of depravity, and nothing of their blasphemous ways can coexist with a walk to the Spirit of God. They are excluded.

3. *Uncharities* are named—"hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders," an insidious, foul, and multitudinous brood, wholly incompatible with a proper Christian life. Man is naturally a proud, impatient, ambitious, and despotic creature. It is hard to meet his wishes, satisfy his demands, and not in one way or another

incur his displeasure or be the slave and victim of his selfishness. Hence the world is full of uncharities, which insinuate themselves more or less into every heart, but which must be put away from us as Christians. Hatred—which is the spirit of murder—must not find place in our hearts. Variance, wrangling, contention, and strife have no business where Christ is Lord and Example. Jealous endeavors to put one another down, inordinate ambition, pompous and offensive self-assertion,—all are of the flesh, and excluded where grace reigns. Angry passions, resentments, and revenge work not the righteousness of God. And all factiousness in Church or State, separatisms for our own vanity or selfishness, partisan zeal, abetting of schism,—all are of the devil, and are excluded where true Christian life holds.

4. *Intemperate excesses* are named—"drunkenness, revellings, and such like." No intemperate man, glutton, gourmand, drinker, or disorderly person is a proper Christian, and cannot be so long as he remains a slave to his appetites, lusts, and excesses.

All these and such-like things belong to the ill fruits of the flesh, and evidence the presence and reign of the old fallen nature, which is not subject to the law of God, nor can be. A walk in the Spirit or life unto righteousness necessarily excludes them.

II. We pass, then, to notice what this walk *includes*. Christianity is a positive thing, and not a list of mere negations. Its life does not consist in mere abstinence from the ugly and wicked things of life. It

has a being and character of its own. It is a development from within, rather than a mere pruning or cutting off of excrescences from without. Practically, it is a man's "*walk*"—his course of life—the whole motion, drift, and activity of his being.

1. It includes, therefore, first of all, the begetment or implantation of a new spiritual life. If any man be in Christ Jesus, he is a new creature; old things have passed away, and all things have become new. How, when, and where this new creature begins no one can tell. It comes in Baptism, in the preaching of the Word, in meditations upon sacred truth, in the teachings and fosterings of God's providential dealings with us. As the gentle evening breeze comes, we know not whence, and goes, we know not whither, "so is every one that is born of the Spirit." It is God's work in and upon the hearts and minds of those who listen to His Word, observe His ordinances, entertain His truth, and yield to His calls and impulses. But as there can be no walk where there has been no birth, so we cannot walk in the Spirit before we have been born of the Spirit—awakened, illuminated, started into life with regard to the things of the Spirit. This, therefore, is necessarily *included*, and is indispensable to a Christian life.

But the Scriptures do not set us worrying about being born again. Regeneration is entirely God's work, not ours. Our business is simply to hear the Word, accept it, and obey it; and if we take the Gospel as it comes to us, trust to what it says, and set ourselves to live and act accordingly, this is the fruit and evidence of a spiritual implantation already

in us. When we hear a child's voice or see a human being on its feet, we know that a birth has been. And just as surely as there could be no human voice or walk where no birth has occurred, so when there is once an animation and motion in spiritual matters we therein have the proof that the grace of God has done its work in begetting us again to newness of life. All that we have then to do is to go forward in the new life which has been given us.

2. But this going forward in life to the Spirit includes a constant warfare. That to which the Spirit quickens, prompts, and leads is against what the flesh or the old carnal nature is alive to and lusts after. There are, therefore, two contrary powers at work in every one who has been at all aroused and impelled by the Holy Spirit. Paul, on setting himself to the spiritual life, found a law in his members warring against the law of his mind. When he would do good, he found evil throwing itself in his way; so that the good that he would he could not always do, and the evil which he would not he often found himself doing. He had an earnest will for what was right, but there was ever a conflicting disability with which he had to strive. And so it is in every case. When people become most earnest and true in aiming at right and fulfilling what they most approve and desire, the more hindrance and difficulty do they encounter. We still have this old corrupt nature to drag along with us in this world, and the lusts of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life to contend with, rendering our whole earthly career as Christians one of incessant warfare. It is

impossible to avoid it. We must fight, and the strife is never ended so long as this life lasts. There is an eternal contrariety between the depraved flesh and the impulses and requirements of the Holy Ghost; and nothing but the death of the body and its reconstruction in the resurrection can get out of it its taint and tendency against the life of the Spirit. We may bring it under as we will, and bruise, mortify, and crucify it as we may, its contrariness to perfect purity and holiness still stirs, and must be for ever watched and warred upon, lest after all we should be overcome and lose our reward.

3. And with this new life and warfare there is further included a continuous growth and improvement in a long list of heavenly graces.

Love is mentioned—the queen and leader of all Christian virtues; the root, spirit, and fulfilment of all duty to God and man. It is a soft, noiseless, pliant, gentle thing, but it is a mighty thing, and as beautiful as mighty. It is the very soul of all good service, the Spirit of Christ, the Spirit of heaven, the sum of all divine perfections. "God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him."

Joy is mentioned—pleasure in God and in the service of God, a glad and cheerful heart for all that God requires. Genuine childship is happy in the Father's will. The Christian does not go to his duties

> like the quarry-slave at night
> Scourged to his dungeon, but sustained and soothed
> By an unfaltering trust,

ever glad to do and bear whatsoever the good Father in heaven may appoint.

Peace is mentioned—a settled and quiet state of the conscience, sure of safety in the arms of Jesus, and calmly composed in the sweet satisfaction that we have nothing to fear, seeing that we have given ourselves unreservedly to God, and that His word and promises are yea and amen to them that hope in Him.

Long-suffering is named—a patient forbearance under injuries and insult; and *gentleness*—a general kindliness of disposition which thinketh no evil, and is slow to take part against any one when it can be helped; and *goodness*—benignity in active well-doing and beneficence, the pattern of which we find in our blessed Lord; and *faith*—not so much belief, but rather fidelity, faithfulness, honesty, keeping to our word, promises, and profession; and *meekness*—an acquiescence of spirit in the will of God, particularly under adversity and wrong; and *temperance*—self-rule, holding in check and under control the appetites and lusts of the flesh.

If we would walk in the Spirit, these are the things in which we must exercise ourselves, and after such characteristics must we earnestly aim; for herein is the very life and spirit of our calling in Christ Jesus.

III. We proceed, then, to the third point: What does such walking in the Spirit *conclude?* What does it settle and establish?

1. It concludes and establishes in and to us a true and blessed freedom. It is by walking to the Spirit

that a good conscience is secured, and exemption from the lashes and stings of its accusations and condemnation. A sensual and carnal man can never seriously think over his life without a sense of meanness. He stands as a convict before the bar of his own heart. He feels at every step that he is a miserable slave and fool, and cannot look Godward without shame and despair. But he whom the Son of God makes free is free indeed. Embracing Christ as his Redeemer and giving himself to be led and directed as God wills, he knows that the law is satisfied, and has the assured confidence of being a child of God. *He is a free man*—free from the entanglements of the law, free from the dominancy and meanness of base lusts, free from all disabling and tormenting fears, and ever assured that he is in the right way. To keep down his spiritual pride he is still tempted, assailed, tried, and often compelled to fight hard; but with all he has this confidence, that God is his Father and Friend, and that he has a citizenship and interest in the kingdom of grace as a freeman of the Lord.

2. Walking in the Spirit concludes and establishes to and in us a blessed community with Jesus Christ. It is His life, Spirit, and grace made operative in us, conforming us to His image, giving us part in all that He is and achieves for His people, and endowing us with all His riches. Having been born again of the Spirit, and active now in the things of this new life and being, we are the children of God; and if children, then heirs, heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Jesus Christ. All our defects, infirmities, and

sins are covered by His sublime perfections and merits. He stands and answers for us. We become so united with Him and so stationed in Him that everything of His is for our sakes, put to our account, made to inure to our benefit, as one with Himself in all the immunities of His Church and kingdom.

3. The same also concludes and establishes a convincing demonstration of the reality and divinity of our religion. For the proof that Christianity is of God the first heralds of it constantly appealed to the great change which it wrought in the character, life, and manners of those who embraced it. Our Lord once said to the dull and obdurate Jews, "When the branch of the fig tree is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that the summer is nigh;" and, by the same rule of judging, when a new growth appeared in the lives of men—when from Israel in her barrenness and from wilder and remoter countries people through the Gospel were recovered from their old deadness and sins, changed in the spirit of their minds, animated with new and better virtues, and found walking in the Spirit after the superior model set in the life of Jesus—it was a sure and certain proof that a new power was in the world, a new dispensation begun, and a veritable potency from God put forth upon men. So the apostle's converts became his epistles—his letters of credit to those to whom he came—which all might see and read, and be satisfied that the grace of God which he preached was a living reality. Nor is there a better evidencing and substantiating of the Gospel we profess

than just this of living up to its spirit and showing by our lives that our profession is not a thing of mere empty words.

4. And still further does an honest walking in the Spirit conclude and establish to us our title to the eternal inheritance. According to Peter's word, this is the way to make our calling and election sure. We may be forgiven, and accepted as candidates for heaven, but unless we follow it up with a corresponding diligence and activity in sacred things, we forfeit all, and lose all right to hope for a place in the eternal kingdom. But if we do these things, the promise is that we shall never fall, and that so an entrance shall be ministered unto us abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. It is not our works or goodness that saves us, but it is our fruitfulness in Christian attainment and endeavor, constantly persevered in, which puts the seal of truth and reality upon our faith, and thus confirms to us our hopes and title to eternal life in Christ Jesus. This makes the anchor fast. This takes hold on the golden cords which lift into the joys of eternity.

See, then, from all this, what is involved in a true and availing Christian life. It is not a mere thing of words and forms and names and ceremonies. It is not a mere emotional thing, which is very soft, tender, and willing for the time, but which fades away after the excitement is over. It is not a mere transient awakening to our lost estate, or an interest and earnestness, however lively, which gradually subsides and leaves things about where they were

before. It is such a birth of the Spirit as leads us to walk in the Spirit through the whole course and in all the activities of life. What does it avail that our names are on the church-books, and that we appear now and then at the communion-table, if meanwhile we never concern ourselves about the means of grace or the ordinances of the sanctuary, and make ourselves at home with worldlings and worldlinesses just the same as if we had never sworn before God to renounce all these things? No, no; if we have come to the life of the Spirit, we must walk in the Spirit, and not fulfil the lusts of the flesh. And if we are not prepared and willing for this, we are not yet saved, and have no good hope of heaven.

See also from this subject what a beautiful garden is a true Christian heart. Nothing is there which the law can take hold of, and everything is there to make life sweet and pleasant. Weeded of all deadly plants, it is fragrant and joyous with the fruits and flowers of goodness and grace, watered with the rivers of salvation. And the outlooks are blessed. Behind is Sinai in its majesty, but too far removed now to excite terror or alarm. On the right is Calvary's hill, with the holy cross on its summit and the open sepulchre in its cleft side, whispering the story of accomplished redemption. On the left is the hallowed Mount of Olives, meekly bowed under the Saviour's parting blessing, but glowing also with the glory of His ascension and His promises. And beyond, glittering in jewels and gold, is Mount Zion, the heavenly Jerusalem, bathed in the light of God and the Lamb, where grows the tree of life, and the

holy river flows, and the voices of the ransomed ring, and the King eternal dwells. And such a garden may each heart become. *We* cannot make it such, but the grace of God in Christ Jesus can if only we are willing and dutiful. Though it may have long been overrun with noxious and ugly plants, and defiled with every base and venomous thing, it can be cleared and cleansed and beautified and made a very paradise of God if it is only submitted to the sacred operations of the Holy Ghost, and the man or woman, youth or maiden, will only be set to walk as God directs.

See, then, also from this subject, what a sweet world heaven must be—a boundless lawn of living moral flowers—an accumulation of little gardens without number, full of all sacred and precious things. It is the world of ransomed souls, purged of everything filthy, and adorned with the ever-blooming fruits of the Spirit of God.

And now, what shall we say to these things? A bright and glorious world glows and glitters before us, and here is the plain and only way to it. Child of sorrow, have you made a start for it? Are you walking in the path which alone can bring you thither? Have you stumbled in the way, or fallen, or become discouraged in the work? To-day again the sweet voices from heaven are sounding in our ears, calling to renewed exertion. Hear them, gather up new heart, and journey on for the kingdom. Let us stir ourselves to new diligence, and with fresh resolves take hold of the grace that never faileth.

Fifteenth Sunday after Trinity.

GAL. 5 : 25, 26–6 : 1–10 : If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.

Let us not be desirous of vain-glory, provoking one another, envying one another.

Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such a one in the spirit of meekness ; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.

Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.

For if a man think himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself.

But let every man prove his own work, and then shall he have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another.

For every man shall bear his own burden.

Let him that is taught in the word, communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things.

Be not deceived ; God is not mocked : for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.

For he that soweth to his flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption : but he that soweth to the Spirit, shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.

And let us not be weary in well-doing : for in due season we shall reap if we faint not.

As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.

FOR the second time in the same chapter the apostle urges upon the Galatians the importance of walking in the Spirit, if indeed they were spiritually alive. Where there is a spiritual man, he must show himself in a spirit-

ual walk. The inward must appear in the outward, and the external life must accord with the internal principles. The apostle seems to apprehend that these people were not in a safe condition on this point. They belonged for the most part to a race notorious in all ages for drunkenness and revellings, greed for wealth, niggardly avarice, fierce and rancorous self-assertion, a boisterous and menacing manner of speech, and a dominating passion for glory. These peculiarities of their blood appeared also in their connection with the Church. It hence became necessary for the apostle to be very particular and emphatic in repressing these tendencies, and in pointing out the true Christian requirements in the case.

In the passage before us two things are presented which call for careful consideration:

I. What pertains to a True Spiritual Man;
II. Why we should Conform to it.

Luther has expounded these precepts and admonitions as applying mainly to ministers and church-officers, to whom they do eminently apply. It certainly pertains to ministers and leaders in the Church to be spiritual men, but it pertains to all who would take the hopes and promises of the Gospel to be spiritual also, and to prove that they are spiritually alive by the spirituality of their temper and conduct; for no one, whether clergyman or layman, officer or private member, is really living in the Spirit who does not also "walk in the Spirit," as Paul here

counsels and directs. Let us, then, devoutly inquire,

I. What pertains to a True Spiritual Man.

And may God help us to conceive the matter aright and to make it living in ourselves!

1. *A spiritual man must avoid a vain-glorious self-consequence and ambitious self-assertion.*

It is said of the Pharisees that they loved the chief seats in the synagogues, the uppermost rooms at feasts, and to be saluted by high titles in the places of public concourse. Even in their devotions "they loved to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they might be seen of men" and complimented for their superior piety. It is also said of Diotrephes that he loved to have the pre-eminence in the Church, and so magnified his self-consequence that he even snubbed the apostle John. And this greed for distinction, notoriety, and the praises, compliments, and reverential esteem of men, with the despotic arrogance which it breeds, is one of the deepest-rooted and most inveterate vices of fallen humanity. It has always been one of the world's rankest and most disordering poisons. Even the heathen found occasion to declaim vehemently against it as a baneful thing, troubling and ruining communities and states, overturning kingdoms, and revolutionizing governments and empires. It is a damning affection, to which people of high birth, talent, culture, office, and repute for learning and eloquence are specially liable. But it is everywhere and among all classes. Luther says: "There

is no village where there is not some one or other that desires to be counted wiser and be more esteemed than all the rest;" that "when this poison creepeth into the Church it cannot be told how hurtful it is;" and that "as nothing is more ruinous to the Church than this execrable vice, so there is nothing more common; for God never sows a field but Satan's tares presently appear with the wheat, and will by no means be counted inferior to the very best, and straightway there ariseth dissensions, schisms, and sects."

There is something of a gradation in what the apostle here says of this vain-glorious passion for pre-eminence. When one begins to boast, claim, and parade his superior consequence over against others, he provokes them, begets in them a sense of injury and resentment, disposes them to question and dispute his pretensions, and induces alienation, contention, and counter-movements to defeat his self-glorifying manœuvres. And from these is engendered a malignant envy, jealousy, and bitterness, before which all right Christian feeling is borne down and destroyed.

The root of all this mischief is thus traced to a vain-glorious ambition, which in itself the apostle faults as already a departure from the true standard of a spiritual man. It is not a walking in the Spirit, "for where the Spirit is, it reneweth men, and worketh in them new motions, transforming their previous vain-glorious, wrathful, and envious disposition into humility, gentleness, and patience; so that spiritual people no longer seek their own glory, but the glory

of God, and do not provoke and envy one another, but give place one to another, and in honor prefer one another. On the other hand, those desirous of vain-glory, being absorbed with their own consequence and preferment, though they may boast that they have and live after the Spirit, do but deceive themselves, follow the flesh, and do the works of the flesh, having their judgment already that they cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven" (Luther). It is well enough to desire excellence for the sake of excellence and for the more efficient service of God and His Church, but to desire it for the gratification of one's own vanity is only carnal and devilish. It is not glory for men to seek their own glory (Prov. 25 : 27). The Saviour speaks of it as impossible to have right faith if we are all the while looking after honor from men, and seek not rather the honor that cometh only from God (John 5 : 44). And if we would "walk in the Spirit" we must "not be desirous of vain-glory, provoking one another, envying one another."

2. *A spiritual man must be charitable in dealing with the faults of others.*

It is not charity to make light of sin. It is not charity to screen transgressors, to come between them and the condemnation and punishment of their crimes. It is not charity to treat the guilty and incorrigible as if they were virtuous and good. It is not charity to stay the hand of government from hanging the murderer, punishing the thief, and bringing villains to judgment. All this would be the height of uncharity toward the lives, possessions,

and peace of the whole community. And when people in the Church disgrace it by ungodly lives, and prove themselves disturbers, malignant fomenters of faction, and agents of disorder and scandal, it is not love or charity to wink at their iniquities or to allow them place in the congregation, unless they thoroughly repent and show that they have come to a proper Christian mind and humility.

But it *is* charity to remember the weakness and frailty of human nature, to bethink ourselves how easy it is to be betrayed and surprised into sin, and to bear in mind how frequently we all offend, and how liable every one is to be overtaken by faults, even as the bold and confident Peter in the very hour when he thought himself the strongest. It *is* charity not to be severer toward the faults of others than we are toward our own, and to temper our censures of those who have done wrong by the consideration that their faults of to-day may perchance be ours to-morrow. It *is* charity kindly and mercifully to try to recover and restore an unfortunate offender, rather than to anathematize and damn him as for ever beyond the reach of all further sympathy and consideration—to recover and restore him to a right mind and true evangelical penitence, in order that he may be recovered and restored to the confidence of his brethren and to the fraternal fellowship of the Church. And this sort of charity in dealing with those who have fallen into sin is what the apostle here insists on as one of the marks and requirements of a spiritual man.

3. A further demand in the same line is *the exer-*

cise of a spirit of helpfulness to our fellow-Christians when under heavy burdens.

This rule applies in all cases of hardship and distress where we have it in our power to help weak and suffering brethren, but especially where persons have fallen into sin and are faithfully striving to get back to right life and to regain the favor and confidence of their fellow-Christians. "This commandment belongeth not to those who deny Christ, and not only do not acknowledge their sin, but also defend it. Neither doth it belong to those who still continue in their sin, and so also in measure deny Christ. Such must first forsake their sin, or we become partakers of their evil deeds if we seek to uphold them (2 Cor. 6 : 17). Those who are overtaken with sin, and have upon them the burdens which Paul commandeth us to bear, are such as willingly hear God's Word and believe, and yet against their will do fall into sin, and, being admonished, do not only receive such admonition gladly, but also detest their sin and endeavor to amend. In such case we are not to be hard and merciless, but after the example of Christ, who beareth and forbeareth such, we are to bear and forbear them also" (Luther). And as some of these Galatians were great zealots for the law, the apostle reminds them that here is a law for which they would do well to be zealous, even "the law of Christ," which He fulfilled Himself, and which lies upon all His followers as a rule for them also. And the law which he thus commends is nothing more nor less than the law of love.

4. *A spiritual man is always modest and reserved*

in propounding his own virtues and worth as a standard for other people.

There is a strong tendency in all of us to think ourselves better than we are; and this tendency is the strongest in those whose piety is the weakest. Those who *are* something are the least likely to lay claim to it; and those who are most forward in claiming to be something are most likely to be the dupes of their own vain fancies. As to his apostleship, Paul could claim that he was not inferior to the chiefest of the apostles, but as a man he rated himself as the least of all saints, because he had so murderously persecuted the Church of Christ. All of us are very infirm and weak. We cannot look into our past lives without seeing many a crookedness in the way through which we have come, nor yet into our every-day life without finding wherewith to reproach ourselves and to say that we are very unprofitable servants. If we are better than some others, it is all from the superabounding grace of God, for which we can take no credit to ourselves. If that grace were withdrawn for a moment, like doubting Peter on the waters we would sink. And for such as we to set ourselves up as rules for others, and to assume judgeship over them for not answering to this standard, is to depart very far from a genuine spirituality of mind and heart, and proves that we have perpetrated a gross and fleshly imposition upon ourselves. It is but a repetition of the self-deception of the Laodiceans, who claimed that they were rich and increased with goods, and had need of nothing, while yet, to the eye of Jesus, they were

wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked.

5. *A spiritual man is most critical in what concerns his own standing with God, remembering his personal responsibility to the final judgment.*

The great thing in practical Christianity is for every one to make sure that he is a true believer, that his faith is sound and living, that his heart is given fully to the Saviour, that he is really in the love and favor of God, and that it is the supreme object of all his desires and efforts to be found of his Lord in peace, without spot and blameless. This is quite enough to absorb all the time and attention and to call into action all the critical power we have, that we may rightly judge our case, and that, judging ourselves, we may not be condemned when God shall call us into judgment. To find our consolation in the slips, faults, and weaknesses of others, or in the applause that may be bestowed by those around us, is a poor foundation on which to rest. He who has no better sources of happiness depends on fickle streams which may at any time dry up, and which can contribute nothing wherewith to give us standing in the great inquisition. The only enduring springs of rejoicing are those which the Holy Ghost opens in the soul of him whose supreme and constant endeavor is to keep himself in living faith and harmony with God, having the testimony of a good conscience and an assured hope in Jesus. No matter for the estimates or opinions of men, or how it may be with others: such a man has his own sweet happiness apart from every one else, which noth-

ing earthly can give and nothing earthly can take away.

6. And yet, again, *a spiritual man is ever abounding and unwearied in active beneficence.*

Christian beneficence takes in three classes, each differing from the other in the grade and degree of its claims.

Foremost, and the highest in their claims on Christian regard, stand the ministers of the Word. Here the apostle's direction is specific and positive: "*Let him that is taught in the Word communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things.*" The common law of gratitude for favors received, which recognizes that "the laborer is worthy of his hire," and provides that servants of the temple shall live of the temple, underlies what God has ordained on this point—to wit, that those who preach the Gospel are to have their living from their labors in the Gospel. And the withholding of tithes and offerings for this purpose is enumerated in the Scriptures as a species of robbery of God (Mal. 3 : 8–10). Luther says it is a very unpleasant thing for ministers to speak of the obligations of Christians on this subject, as it looks like an obtrusive commendation of themselves, but that there is often such Gallic niggardliness to be met with that we must assail it as Paul here does, and tell the people that they deny their profession and fail to make good their character as spiritual men if they are not willing to give of their substance to sustain the ministry of the Word, or refuse to share their goods for the maintenance of those whom they acknowledge as their teachers and spiritual

helpers and guides, and whom God has ordained as His ambassadors.

The next in claim to our benevolent consideration is "the household of faith." Our fellow-believers, who stand associated with us in the confession and service of the Lord Jesus, are to us our closest relatives next after our Christian fathers. They are the members of the same family with us—our brothers and sisters. Various are the ties and relationships by which people are knit together in this world, but they are all fleshly and distant in comparison with the close and heavenly relations by which true Christians are united together in Christ. And as the spiritual children of the same spiritual family and members together of the same spiritual body, they are to have a care, sympathy, and affection for one another which puts them under the strongest obligation, as they have opportunity, to "do good" to one another, and to favor and help each other in preference to all other classes of people. If we are to do good to anybody, it is to be "*especially unto them who are of the household of faith.*" Otherwise we deny the faith itself, and are worse than the heathen.

But Christian beneficence is not to stop with the support of spiritual teachers and special interest in the fellowship of believers. "As we have opportunity" we are to "*do good unto all men.*" While our charity is to begin at home, it is not to end there. All men, as men, have claims upon us which we are not to disregard, particularly as respects the carrying of the Gospel to them and the endeavor to bring them to faith and salvation. They have souls which

we must care for. They are in perils from which we are to exert ourselves to rescue them. And they are often in want and wretchedness from which we are not to shut up our bowels of compassion.

Thus, then, are we to show ourselves spiritual people, alive and walking in the Spirit.

Notice now some of the considerations which the apostle urges, or,

II. WHY WE SHOULD THUS DISPOSE OURSELVES.

The first, and that which underlies and runs through all the rest, is, that *unless we thus walk in the Spirit, we cannot safely count ourselves alive in the Spirit.* We may be called Christians, but we are not such in reality if these elements of the spiritual man be wanting. We may make profession of Christianity, but it is only a thing of words and emptiness. We may have a name to live, but we are dead; and a dead Christian is no better than a heathen, and will be worse off than a heathen when it comes to the final judgment. By our very name, profession, and being as Christians we are thus bound, impelled, and required, as far as in us lies, to follow and fulfil these several precepts and directions of the inspired apostle. To neglect or disregard them, or wilfully and consciously to turn aside from any one of them, is to that extent to damage and nullify our Christian life, and take away just so much from our hopes of heaven.

More particularly, the apostle here refers us to a great law of nature which holds also in this case, and one which must decide our immortal future.

He likens human life in this world to a seeding for eternity, and assures us that the reaping there must be according to the sowing here. Walking in the Spirit he claims to be a sowing to the Spirit, the natural harvest from which is "life everlasting;" and every other sort of walk he claims to be a sowing to the flesh, the natural harvest from which is corruption and rottenness.

We are all moral husbandmen, seed-sowers, planters for harvests to be reaped by us hereafter. Whether we will it or not, our Maker has placed us here for this very purpose. He has lodged us on these plantations, and made us sowers and planters of seeds; and we can no more escape from it than from our own existence. We *must sow*, and we *are* sowing, every day and hour that we live. Every act, thought, doing, feeling, or failing to do is a planting which will and must inevitably produce its fruit to condition our destiny. If we make a good or bad disposal of ourselves, the corresponding harvest of it we will have to reap. If we mistake, misdirect our energies, or sow ill seed, we must take the consequences. However we may deceive ourselves, "God is not mocked." We cannot thwart His laws or escape their operation. We cannot unmake His foreordinations. We cannot fool His almightiness. He has made us what we are, and placed us in these conditions, and put upon us these invincible necessities, by which our whole present life is a seeding determinative of the good or evil outcome of our being. We cannot sow one way and reap another. We cannot order ourselves as we

please, and then select the result that we would prefer. "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." We can no more beat back or avoid the consequences of an ill sowing than we can beat back the putting forth of earth's varied vegetation when spring and summer come. The seeds will grow, and the crop is always according to what is sown. And from this invincible law of things the apostle draws the mighty argument for the earnest consecration of ourselves to an unwearied walking in the Spirit and not after the flesh; since "he that soweth to the flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption," and only "he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting."

If we do not care whether we do right or wrong; if we put away from us spiritual things; if we know what our duty is, and do it not; if we persist in following our own likes, fancies, and carnal greed in the hope that God is too merciful and good for any ill to come of it in the end; if we are only impatient and annoyed with church duties and a religious life, and do not half believe what the Word of God teaches; if we will indulge the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, content with preserving a general respectability among our fellowmen; if we find it in our hearts to make light of God's requirements, sacraments, and an earnest and untiring trust and service of the Lord Jesus in whom our salvation stands, to say nothing of the grosser vices, profanities, and sins which mark people of the baser sort,—we certainly are not walking in the Spirit, neither sowing to the Spirit, but walking ac-

cording to the course of this world, and sowing to what is limited to the interests and gratifications of this bodily life. And such a sowing to the flesh, by that good law of God which brings the harvest of corn to the planter of corn, must yield its harvest according to what pertains to the flesh, which is only death and rottenness.

It may seem like a small thing whether we give that full, prompt, and unceasing attention to spiritual things which we admit to be very Christian and beautiful, provided that the general current of our sentiments and the main drift of our lives run with Christianity. But if men would thus reason in the matter of seeding their fields, what would become of their harvests, and whence would they get their bread? Promptly when the season comes, and incessantly as the years roll around, the farmer must give up all else, and spare no pains to put in just such seed and in such conditions as will most surely yield him the crop he desires, or there can be no pleasant harvest for him. And as in the one case, so it is in the other: a general approval of prompt and faithful seeding without the practical doing of it will not bring the desired harvest. An indifferent going through the forms of seeding, content with a shallow ploughing, and caring but little what sort of seed is sown, will not bring the desired harvest. The right time, the right breaking up and conditioning of the ground, the right care to sow nothing but pure and living seed, and the diligent sowing of it in proper proportions over every part of the field, are alike indispensable to a good harvest. And so

it is also in this spiritual husbandry. If the life of the heavenly harvest is not in the seed which we sow on earth, the crop will be nothing but rottenness; and even the sowing of good seed, if the other conditions be not faithfully observed, must result in equal failure.

Thus, then, are we all shut in to the necessity of walking in the Spirit and of filling out the elements and proportions of the spiritual man, or the result will be certain perdition. There is nothing arbitrary in the matter. The disastrous end comes as the natural result of a good and beneficent law, the suspension of which would unmake everything. Eternal death is not the creation of vindictive justice in God, but the natural operation of that same good law on which He gives us our daily bread. He does not damn and punish faithless and guilty men by the hurling of thunderbolts from His throne or digging a pit of unquenchable fire as the eternal crematory of souls. The unbelieving forge and execute their own sentence, and are their own punishers and destroyers, by persisting in the sowing and planting of what in its own nature can only bring forth everlasting corruption, decay, and wretchedness. They grow their own hell by their own sowing. Let a man yield himself to his own pleasure and self-will; let him live only for his own carnal gratification and glory; let him indulge, train, and educate himself always to consult with flesh and blood and to frame his conduct to the interests and gains of this present world; let him cut loose from the beneficent laws on which God has conditioned His favor and blessing,

letting go his anchorage to the better reason, conscience, and the teachings of the Spirit,—and he needs nothing else to land him on the coasts of a barren eternity, where, like a wrecked ship, he can only rot for ever in the fruits of his own ill adventures.

In like manner the saints grow their own heaven. The germ-life of all its blessedness begins on earth in the faith, devotions, and holy endeavors of the spiritual man. It is the natural harvest of the prompt and unwearied improvement of this earthly seed-time which God in His mercy has vouchsafed to all of us. The simple maturity of a life in harmony with the constitution of the moral universe, the mere bringing forth unto perfection that which faith and virtue and walking in the Spirit sows, is the true essence of heaven. What if there should be no literal harps or crowns or city of gold or crystal streams or immortal flowers? Christianity has more to offer than a Mohammedan Paradise. A heart full of pure, holy, true, and harmonious affections is harp enough. A soul imbued with the Spirit of God, and by divine grace kept in unison with the true, the beautiful, and the good, is crown and throne enough. To have the fountains of moral impulse clear, the understanding illuminated with the unclouded light of truth, and all the outgoings of our being swayed to the will of the good Father in heaven, is a blessed river of water of life such as no creature can otherwise enjoy. And to have fellowship with the spotless, lovely, and loving, beautified in the likeness of the Saviour, is a sufficient Para-

dise. By all the laws of the eternal Creator the spiritual man must inherit everlasting life, for he sows to that life, and "whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap."

Dear friends, let us, then, not be weary in well-doing, for in due season we shall reap if we faint not. Sowing is always a self-denying work. It looks like throwing away that which is precious. It is laborious, and has much about it to make us wonder whether this or that shall prosper or be of any real use. But he that goeth forth bearing precious seed, even if it be with tears, shall doubtless return again with rejoicing, bearing his sheaves with him. The spiritual man is the immortal man, and the sowing to the Spirit is that which brings the harvest of eternal life.

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Sixteenth Sunday after Trinity.

Eph. 3 : 13–21 : Wherefore I desire that ye faint not at my tribulations for you, which is your glory.

For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, that he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God.

Now unto Him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto him be glory in the Church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.

THERE is a peculiar depth and splendor about this passage. We cannot now make a full exploration of it. One thing conspicuously appears in it, to wit: *the apostolic ideal of a Christian.* In this relation, then, let us look at it, praying God to enlighten us by His truth, and to make of us what the apostle so earnestly implored upon these Ephesians.

Who, then, is a thorough Christian according to this ideal? and what are some of the marks and glories which most distinguish him? This is an interesting field of inquiry, and calls for each one's attentive consideration.

I. *A thorough Christian is one who discriminates between Christianity and what relates to its advocates.* This is brought out in the very first words. The apostle beseeches his Ephesian converts not to faint at his tribulations—not to think less of Christianity, or to do less in the way of Christian fidelity, on account of the misfortunes which had come upon him. It was by his ministry they had been brought out of their idolatries to faith and hope in Christ; but he was now a prisoner. He who had stirred up all Ephesus and all the region round about by his boldness, eloquence, miracles, and preaching of the truth as it is in Jesus had been arrested, chained, and led away captive to Rome, to be tried as an offender; and there was danger of an unfavorable reaction from this circumstance, and that these people would be shaken in their faith, cooled in their ardor, and turned aside from their profession.

There is a tendency in human nature to relax and relapse from doctrines when the advocates and champions of them get into trouble or disrepute. Even the courageous Peter failed when he saw his Lord under arrest. There is nothing which so readily dissuades some people from a cause as the ill-favor with which the public may regard it. When tribulation and persecutions come they fall away. But in Paul's view such behavior does not pertain to true Christian thinking and manliness. He wished his Ephesian brethren not to be weakened by reason of his arrest and sufferings. They were to distinguish between the cause and the afflictions which had come upon its apostle. Gold is still gold though it be

found around a harlot's neck; and truth is truth, and duty and right remain duty and right, no matter what adversities befall those who stand for it. Public sentiment, or the manner in which this world deals with the Pauls and Luthers and truth-finders and truth-tellers in general, is a poor guide for an honest and good man to set his conscience by. The truth of Christianity does not depend upon what happens to its friends and propagators. Its origin and authority are not of men, nor to be determined by the ill-favor that may be heaped upon its abettors. Paul had received the Gospel by revelation from heaven, and it must needs remain the same divine and saving thing whatever might become of him. It is to be received and held because it is the truth of God and the power of God unto salvation, apart from all questions about the standing and repute of its ministers.

A thorough believer is not concerned about what the world thinks of his preacher. He distinguishes the cause from all such external accidents. He looks at the truth, authority, and blessedness of the thing, and not at the weaknesses, wrongs, or ill-fortunes of the earthen vessels by whom it is carried. Let the world find fault if it will; let it hate, persecute, arrest, afflict, and punish the Lord's apostles as it pleases; let it treat them as never such enemies and outlaws;—that does not alter his convictions, shake his constancy, cool his ardor, or destroy his faith. Nay, he knows that such must be the fate of all apostolic men where the world speaks and acts out its perverseness and depravity. He knows also that

it is a blessed thing for mankind and for himself that the Gospel has power to nerve men to suffer for it and to maintain it in the face of sword and fire and death. It has been through such tribulations that it came to him and that he has been made to taste of its preciousness. For all his hopes and comforts as a Christian he is indebted to just such heroic constancy and endurance for truth's sake. And far be it from him to let go those hopes and sublime persuasions because Jewish or heathen zealots aim to put Christ's apostles out of the way and out of the world. In those early times it was the preacher's unpopularity and offensiveness to the world that brought salvation to them that believed; and it is much the same to this day. So that a thorough Christian, in Paul's view, is one who can discriminate between the merits of a cause and the judgment the world pronounces upon its preachers, and who stands the firmer to his Christian principles as he beholds the persecutions heaped upon the apostles of those principles. He faints not at the tribulations of God's faithful ones, seeing that through them he himself has obtained salvation.

II. *A thorough Christian is a praying man.* Paul was a Christian, and Paul was a man of prayer. The first thing noted of him after his conversion was: "Behold, he prayeth;" and the same was characteristic of him throughout his whole subsequent career. Here he tells his Ephesian converts of his wont to bow his knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ to implore upon them what they needed.

Some think it an effeminate and cowardly thing to pray. They consider it well enough for children and women and womanly men, but not for dignified, brave, and manly people. Shame on their dignity! Where was ever a man of more manliness than Paul? Who ever exhibited a more robust intellect, a more sublime courage, a more unfaltering or effective greatness, than this selfsame prisoner at Rome? He was a greater man than all the Cæsars, and made a deeper, broader, and more enduring mark upon the world than any other mere man that has ever lived. And yet we find him, in all his masterly courage and heroism, again and again upon his knees, crying to God as a needy child would cry to a father. Nay, his prayers were what helped to make him great. It was not his intellect, his learning, his eloquence, or his untiring zeal and energy that carried him through his glorious career, so much as his constant resting and calling upon God, firing these great faculties and powers with flames from heaven, and setting them in motion for mighty deeds. Nor has there ever been a man whose good fame has survived time's desolating ravages, nor a hero of all the triumphs for God and truth and human blessedness, but drew his greatest strength from the same constant communion with God in prayer. Talk of genius, of erudition, of eloquence, of will: there are no qualities like those which prayer imparts—no inspiration of address or heroism or power like that which a man brings with him from intercourse with his Maker at the mercy-seat. Prayer makes mighty men and prophets and apostles and martyrs and conquerors

and kings. And he who thinks meanly of prayer thinks meanly of man's sublimest privileges, depreciates the source of man's most effective power, and has not yet learned the alphabet of true wisdom or saving religion.

When Paul wrote the text he was a prisoner. He was under guard by day and by night. He could no more go abroad to the battle for the cross of Christ. But, though the hand of persecution had confined and restrained his body, dragged him from the arena, and shut him in from his friends, it could not stifle his prayers. God is in prisons as well as temples, and prayers can reach Him as well from dungeons as from sanctuaries. No earthly bonds or walls or iron gates can restrain a good man's prayers. No loss of liberty, no absence of friends, no solitariness, no locks, no guards, can hinder converse with the Almighty or cut off communications with the grand Source of all supplies.

These are blessed privileges, when we can sit down under our own vine and fig tree and worship without constraint or molestation. It is a sweet and heavenly thing to gather with our friends and children in the same beautiful sanctuary of God to sing and pray and hear and make common supplication with and for one another unto our common God and Father. But beyond this is the blessed assurance that when persecution scatters these assemblies and hushes the voice of public worship, or sickness and infirmity confine us to our own private chambers, or foes in power or calls of duty or any earthly necessity carry us far away from friends and home, we still have an

open and easy way to the mercy-seat, which no enemy or adversity can close, where we may still meet all whom we love, and by which we can come direct to God for mercy and grace to help in every time of need. Oh, the blessedness, the constancy, the infallibility of the power of prayer! It is an arm, a treasure, an unfailing force, which abides with us when stript of every earthly good. And the use which the imprisoned apostle tells that he made of it shows and proves that in his view there is no thorough Christianity without diligence and perseverance in prayer.

III. *A thorough Christian is inwardly strong.* Paul bowed his knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying for these Ephesians to be "strengthened with might in the inner man." This inward power, therefore, belonged to his conception of what a genuine Christian ought to be and what a thorough Christian is.

People are generally covetous of power, but the strength which most attracts them is what they are least fit to have and what is least exalting in its nature. There is physical strength, which is desirable in its way, but Samson had it beyond all other men, and yet was a very weak and insipid character. There is power of wealth, wisdom, and official place, but Solomon had it in perfection, and yet broke down in the midst of all his grand estate, and confessed with bitterness and tears that it was vanity and vexation of spirit. What men require is not so much physical, material, social, intellectual, or polit-

ical power, as *strength in the inner man*—moral strength, spiritual force, strength and energy wrought by the Holy Ghost in the moral nature. The Psalmist referred to it when he said, "In the day when I cried Thou answeredst me, and strengthenedst me with *strength in my soul*."

"The inner man" is that higher nature by which we stand most closely related to God and duty and destiny; and it is strength in these faculties and vigor in these affairs—in conscience, in heart-convictions, in spiritual activities—which stands first in the list of human wants and highest in the sphere of human attainment. It is just here that our nature is weakest and most broken down. We are weak in the inner man—infirm in spirit and in the graces of the spirit. Vigor of soul in the recognition of God and His Christ, and our privileges, duties, and responsibilities under Him, is strength in the inner man. It is strength to perceive and lay hold upon truth and duty, and inflexibility of resolve to pursue it. It is strength of illumination and substance of character in that which is true, beautiful, and good. We may be strong in muscle, in intellect, in learning, in place, in outward possessions, and yet weak in moral sense, in spiritual earnestness, in dutiful fidelity. A really strong man is one who has clear convictions, and whose life is made to conform to those convictions. Such a man is allied to God; the Holy Ghost is in him as a spirit of power; and the very strength of Omnipotence works with him. He is like an oak which bends not to the winds. If temptations arise, he withstands and conquers them. If

afflictions come, he stands firm under them like the Alps under the snows and glaciers which heaven casts upon them. Nothing can break down his confidence, his courage, his hope, for the Lord is his strength and his salvation.

This spiritual power is not a noisy, bustling, showy power, as some would dream. It cometh not with observation. It is a spirit. It is, like the light, silent—like the unseen force of spring-time, which touches the latent seeds and roots and life-energies of nature and sets them all in strong but gentle action, we know not how and cannot trace when or where. But it comes—comes from God, comes through the Spirit, comes to all, as our hearts are open to the heavenly and divine. Nor has any one yet come into the full possession of what Christ means for men, or reached a right thoroughness in his Christianity, if he has not thus been invigorated from on high and strengthened with might of the Spirit in the inner man. Such, at least, was the apostolic ideal.

IV. *A thorough Christian has Christ in his heart.* Paul wished this to his Ephesian converts. He must, therefore, have counted it among the proper possessions and experiences of those who make full proof of their Christian privileges.

Corporeally, Christ is in heaven, and not in that sense does He dwell in Christians. Paul once wrote to the Philippians that he had them always in his heart. He did not mean that they were locally and corporeally there, but that he had them in continual

remembrance and affection, and was the most profoundly concerned for them. In like manner, Christians have Christ in them. He is in their thoughts, and never absent from their minds as their hope, comfort, and salvation. One reason why we have so little enjoyment of our religion, why we are so easily disheartened in our calling, why we are so feeble in devotion and so often overclouded in spirit, is, that we do not think enough about Jesus, and do not keep Him sufficiently in view. He is not enough in our hearts. We know the story of His life and deeds and promises, but we do not dwell on it; we do not habitually recur to it; we do not keep it as a living thing in our hearts; and so our blessed Lord cannot be said to dwell in us. Our thoughts of Him are too occasional, too exceptional, too periodic; so that He is only in us betimes, and we do not have him abiding there as our example, trust, and portion.

But there is a higher sense in which Christ is in His people. Christians are members of His body and of His flesh and of His bones. They are one spiritual organism with Him. He is the Head of that organism, which depends upon Him and has all its life and light from Him. One life and one spirit pervade both; and that spirit is His spirit. Hence it is written, "If any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of His." As the natural man lives the Adamic life, so Christians live the Christ-life. His own characteristics and vitality are propagated in them and reproduced in them. They become Christ-like—reborn in His image, new-created

in his likeness. What is in Him as their Head is effective also for them, imputed to them, made living in them; so that it is not so much they that live, as Christ that liveth in them. As the branch is part of the vine, and lives in the vine, and partakes of the same life as the vine, so are true Christians related to their Redeemer. They draw from Him all that they have as Christians, and He dwells in them and walks in them. It is not a physical indwelling, for it is "*by faith.*" But such power and effect has true belief in the Lord Jesus that it not only takes hold of His righteousness as our justification, but generates a corresponding righteousness in the believer, transforms him into the image of his Lord, and causes that holy Christ to be seen in the whole temper and activity of the man's earthly being. Christ lives again in the man and dwells in him. Oh, for such a faith, for such an inhabitation of our Saviour, for such a constant, living, loving, life-presence of our blessed Lord in our hearts! Then would we be Christians indeed.

V. *A thorough Christian is rooted and grounded in love.* The fulfilling of the law is *love*—first to God, and then to our fellow-men. It is the prince of gifts, the jewel in the golden ring of spiritual virtues, the perfection of all faith and all works. A magnificent description of it is given by this same apostle in his letter to the Corinthians (1 Cor. 13)—a description which has no parallel in literature. And in this love as a controlling principle and life every thorough Christian is deeply planted and settled.

It is a great thing for the heart to be fixed and the affections firmly established. This flickering and fluctuating piety, which is so ardent to-day and so dead to-morrow, is not what is required. We need something steadfast, stable, and enduring, like a tree well rooted which defies the storm—like a house built on the solid rock, which nature's commotions cannot sweep away. True religion is not like a mill which depends on freshets to do its work, but like a clock moved from within, which goes on day and night, in damp and drought, in calm and storm, alike. This barometer-piety, which rises and falls with the changes in the atmosphere—this morning-cloud holiness, which is born of the night and wilts when the sun rises—this fitful zeal, which is valiant in day-time, but cowers away when the darkness draws on, —none of it is of any account with God. The Church needs cedars, not sensitive-plants—sturdy oaks, not mushrooms—vertebrated Christians, not mollusks. Fickleness in anything is contemptible, but it is specially unsatisfactory and insipid in the great matters of God, duty, and eternity. The love of God is a thing of principle, fixed and settled, and not mere passionate impulse or a fickle zeal. It is a thing of reflection, understanding, conviction, purpose, habit, not a fluctuating and perishable emotion. To use the apostle's figure, it has roots to it—*roots* which strike deep, hold fast, and cannot be pulled out or blown away—*foundations* which stand firm, and are not to be unsettled by the passing gusts. "Whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether

there be knowledge, it shall vanish away;" but "charity never faileth." "Faith" is abiding, "hope" is abiding, and "charity" is abiding; but the most abiding of all is charity. To be rooted and grounded in this is to be rooted and grounded for eternity; whilst to be without it, whatever else may be our showy gifts and works, we are nothing. Hence the word is, "*Follow after charity*," for only as we are rooted and grounded in this are we thorough Christians.

VI. Still further, *it belongs to a complete Christian to know the love of Christ.* Paul gives it as one of the sublime attainments of all saints that they are "able to comprehend what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height, and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge." A subject rises upon his view which instantly spreads out into illimitable dimensions. The love of Christ! What tongue can tell, what mind can grasp, the vastness of it? We can measure the breadth of empires, the length of continents, the depth of seas, the height of stars, but who shall measure for us the breadth and length and depth and height of the love of Christ? We are bewildered and lost the moment we attempt it.

How broad is it? Broad as the world, broad as the wanderings of man, broad as all the diversities of his races, broad as the ages of time, broad as the necessities of all men together; for by the grace of God He tasted death for every man (Heb. 2 : 9).

How long is it? As long as human history, as long as the duration of a soul made in Jehovah's

image, as long as the existence of God; for "the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting" (Ps. 103 : 17).

How deep is it? Deep as earth is below heaven, deep as humanity is beneath Deity, deep as death is below life, deep as hell is beneath the glory of eternal royalty; for, though in the form of God, and equal with God, He willingly suffered death and descended into hell, that He might bring sinners to eternal glory.

How high is it? High as the golden thrones of heaven, to which it elevates; high as the beatific vision of the glorified, to which it exalts; high as the regal splendor of Jesus in His eternal majesty; for this is the manner of love wherewith He hath loved us, that we should become the sons of God, and see Him as He is, and be like Him, and reign with Him for ever.

And yet we have not begun to convey an idea of the full dimensions of this love. It "passeth knowledge." But, with all its infinite incomprehensibleness, it belongs to the Christian to know it. He knows it, though he cannot define its boundaries. He knows it as the infinite foundation on which he has built his hopes. He knows it as a matter of faith that has become to him a bond of grateful allegiance to his Saviour—a motive of action, a subject of joy, which fills all his heart and all his life. He knows it as a thing before which his depravity yields, sin vanishes, temptation weakens, and Satan's wiles are powerless. He knows it as a heavenly potency which draws his soul and awakens in him a hatred

of evil and the wish never to offend again, never to doubt again, never to think hard of God again. And could we but have a complete realization of it, gone would be our murmurings, our fears, our discontent, our uncharity, our fondness for earth's follies, our hard thoughts at Divine Providence,—all melted out of us like snow before the summer's sun. Oh, to know more of the shoreless sea of the Saviour's love! What joy of soul, what spiritual power, what victory of faith, what blessedness of heaven, would it import into us!

VII. And yet another item: *A thorough Christian is full of God.* Peter gives it as one of our high privileges that we may become partakers of a divine nature; and Paul here refers to the same thought. He prays for his Ephesians that they "might be filled with all the fulness of God."

There is a divine fulness which is incommunicable —a fulness of essential perfections which not heaven, nor even the heaven of heavens, can contain. And yet there is a sense in which God does impart Himself and all His fulness to His people. There are Godward capacities in man which only God can fill. We have minds and hearts and aspirations which reach beyond everything but what is eternal and divine. They may take in all else, but so long as God is left out they are not full, and there still is emptiness and vacancy. Neither can that void be filled with half a God or with a God who is not possessed of absolute perfection. But "the fulness of God" can fill it. There is no mind, no heart, no aspiration

in man that can go beyond Him, or take Him in and not be absolutely and to the last possible jot *full*—for ever full. And with this eternal fulness of Deity it is proposed through Christ to fill us. God has made Himself known, and ordered all His dispensations in the world, that He might fill us with His fulness, even all the fulness of Himself.

This means, however, the exclusion of everything but Himself. We are not filled with God's fulness when our minds and hearts and desires are preoccupied with something else. The natural man keeps God outside, where the merciful Saviour stands and knocks to be admitted. Inside is the devil and the devil's works and delusions, and the door is shut and locked and barricaded to keep out God and to exclude all interferences of His. And even if thoughts and rays of the divine do here and there flash in through the crevices, the space is not filled with God so long as other things have entertainment there. No; to be filled with God the doors must be thrown open, all other guests dismissed, and the house swept and cleansed of all their works and filth, or there can be no entertainment of Jehovah. Paul wished his Ephesians to be filled with God, and hence to have their souls cleared and emptied of everything but God. The fulness of God admits of no co-tenant where it enters. Men cannot serve God and Mammon. Light and darkness, hot and cold, cannot dwell together. Christ hath no concord with Belial. There must be a complete surrender, or none. God must have the whole space, or He will not lodge there. His fulness can fill all, and He

will suffer no supplement to His power and perfection. He made all man's capacities, that He alone might fill them with Himself, and He will permit no abridgment of His prerogatives.

And to be thus emptied of self and sin and Satan, and filled with God, what a blessedness! What a glorious transfiguration of our whole being it involves! To have no more place in us for the "earthy, the sensual, the devilish;" to have all our capacities of illumination filled with light; to have all our outgoings of thought and affection move toward God and in God and with God; to have no aim, no desire, no will but His will,—oh, the liberty, the sweetness, the glory, the divinity of such an attainment! If it were not that an inspired apostle prays for it we would not dare to think it possible. But now we know that it lies within the domain of a complete Christian, and that we do not go beyond bounds when we make it our settled aim and prayer to be "filled with all the fulness of God." This, however, is the climax of apostolic petition and the perfection of all Christian attainment. There is no going beyond this point. From this the sublime doxology begins, and must sound onward for ever: "Now, unto Him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto Him be glory in the Church, by Christ Jesus, throughout all ages, world without end. Amen"

Behold, then, dear friends, how great a thing it is to be a Christian! It gives men wisdom to discriminate. It links men to the strength and almighti-

ness of Heaven. It invigorates with inward power. It incorporates man with Christ and Christ with man in the blessedness of a common life. It roots and grounds in unfailing love. It opens the soul to know what passeth knowledge. And it fills with all the fulness of God. But it is not so great a thing but that we each, by God's grace, may reach it. The way is open; the steps are laid; Jehovah is willing; the call is out; the help is at hand; and nothing remains but for us to open our hearts and let the great salvation in.

Cherish, then, the glorious proclamation. Be alive to the sublime privileges which are brought you in the Gospel. And now, while the great day of your opportunity lasts, see to it that you do not sin it away or neglect your chance. "Behold, now is the accepted time! Behold, now is the day of salvation!"

Seventeenth Sunday after Trinity.

EPH. 4 : 1–6 : I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love; endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.

SIN not only severed man from God, but separated men from each other. Having excluded Adam from Paradise, it set Cain to the slaying of his brother; and from that period to the present alienations, strifes, and wars have made up one of the chief features of this world's history. Human society has all its discords and disharmony from sin. Hence the economy of divine grace for the eradication of sin must have in it the bringing of men into fraternal concord with each other, along with their reconciliation with God. Accordingly, Christians are not only called to personal faith and forgiveness in Christ Jesus, but also to a common fellowship with each other in a community of confession, service, and mutual help as children of the same Father and fellow-citizens in the same spiritual commonwealth. To walk worthy of their vocation, therefore, to have their temper and

life in accord with their calling, demand not only that they should keep themselves in the love of God, but that they should try to walk in amity and good-fellowship with their brethren in the faith. And to this point the apostle from his prison at Rome addresses the exhortation which we have now to consider. Two leading topics present themselves:

I. The True Unity of the Church;
II. What that Unity requires of Us.

The called of God, inclusive of all who have come to true faith in Christ, are here spoken of as "*one body*." They are "a peculiar people," who prior to their incorporation into Christ "were not a people, but are now the people of God." As a spiritual nation or family they must needs have their own particular centre of unity, by which they are united and distinguished. What is that centre or bond of unity? and of what does it consist? This is our first inquiry.

Answering negatively, so as to narrow the question to the real point, we may say that the unity of the Church is not *geographical*, for the Church is found in many different sections of the world and on opposite sides of the most widely separating natural barriers. Neither is it *tribal* or national, for those redeemed unto God by the blood of Christ are from "every kindred and tongue and people and nation." Neither is it *ceremonial*, for it is clear that there have been, and are, many true Christians under very different forms of administration, and it is quite

agreed that human traditions, and rites and ceremonies instituted by men, need not to be everywhere the same. Neither is it *legislative*, or the having of one and the same form of government, whether civil or ecclesiastical; for these have met with all sorts of changes and modifications, while the Church has retained its integrity under all varieties of them. Neither is it *nominal*, for under the greatest diversities of names and denominational organizations the Church of Christ has existed and does now exist—not everywhere in the same perfection, but still in a degree to beget and nourish children of God. Nor yet does the unity of the Church consist in undisturbed affection and unbroken external harmony between its members; for Paul and Barnabas disagreed even to their parting asunder, and yet it made no schism in the Church. And in nothing which comes from man, or that is in any manner dependent on man or the endeavors of man, is the true unity of the Church to be found.

The apostle here speaks of it as a "*unity of the Spirit.*" He does not mean a mere spiritual unity, nor yet a mere unity of spirit; but a unity constituted by the Holy Ghost and dependent upon the Holy Ghost—a unity of which the Spirit of God is the potent Factor, and which is neither increased nor diminished by the external conditions or arrangements of men. The Church does not first come into being, and then form itself into a spiritual corporation. The unity of the Spirit is itself a constitutive unity, without which there is no Church, neither member of the Church. It is

the Holy Ghost who begets all members of the Church, and unites them with the living corporation of saints, no matter about anything else in their case. Being "born of water and of the Spirit," they are from the start and always one with the whole family of the renewed and saved. They are one from their oneness of birth from above, and nothing can make them more really one or more distinct from all other peoples than they are by their creation to newness of life in Christ Jesus through the regenerating power of the Holy Ghost. The external conditions, or the particular outward forms in which spiritual life is manifested, may be very different, so as to present no token of oneness to the eye, and in no case can we surely know from any visible signs who of the various outwardly professing Christians are of the true interior Church. There are certain external marks and notes shown in the preaching and confession of the true Gospel and the right administration of the sacraments, by which we can determine the presence of the Church, and outside of which we are not to look for the Church; but just who of these are inwardly and truly of the Church and of the spiritual fellowship of the renewed and saved these marks and notes do not finally determine. We know no Church outside of them, but under them there are still many who are no true part of Christ's mystical body; so that the essence of the Church's real unity is something still more inward and spiritual than the notes and marks by which its presence is externally indicated.

But the apostle further explains this "unity of the Spirit" as embodied and realized in several particulars.

It is a unity *of corporation:* "there is one body," and only one. The members are many, and the particular groups of members may be many, with all the earthly diversities of nation, language, clime, age, and estate; but, after all, they are one house, one corporation, one edifice, "for as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office, so we, being many, are one body in Christ."

It is a unity *of life.* There is "one Spirit." All Christians are really quickened by the Spirit. They have all been begotten again to newness of life; and the sole agent of that new creation is the Holy Ghost. As Christ in heaven is the hidden life of His people, so the Holy Ghost is the communicator of that life and the spring of its manifestation in and through believers. And, though all have not the same gifts or all in the same degree, yet all have the same life, wrought by one and the selfsame Spirit. Nor do children more really live the one life that they have derived from their parents than all Christians live the one life from the one Spirit. There is an absolute unity of spiritual parentage, and of the life coming from that parentage.

It is a unity *of hope:* "even as ye are called in one hope of your calling." The call of the Gospel has but one common end in view. The end of our faith is the salvation of our souls—forgiveness, sanctification, and eternal life. To this one intent

alone has there been any calling of men by the Gospel, and to this one end have all they embraced the Gospel who have really embraced it. The spheres and surroundings of Christians may differ, and the degrees of glory to which they attain may be diverse; but in all their varied duties and places they have all had but one and the same divine vocation to the same blessed inheritance, and all have before them as their animating goal the same glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

It is a unity *of headship*. They all have "one Lord." "To us," says the apostle, "there is one Lord Jesus Christ;" and He is "the Head over all things to the Church, which is His body." Different sects of professing Christians have a very different Christ; at least, they assign to Christ a nature, office, and relation to His people greatly varying. But there is only one Christ, and all who really are Christ's have the one Christ, the God-man, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. He is not God to one, God-man to another, and a mere man or incarnate angel to a third. Christ is not divided. Some, indeed, may apprehend Him with a greater fulness and perfection of faith and understanding than others; but so far as He is savingly apprehended by any He is always one and the same, and perfectly identical in nature and office to all who have the right to be named by His name. And in this apprehension of the one Christ as the One Lord, and trust in Him as the one Saviour, and submission to Him as the one Head and Sovereign over heart and life and faith and hope, all true Christians are one. Where

there is discrepancy or diversity as to the Lord and Christ whom men receive and hope in, either the one or the other is not in the unity and community of the saints at all, not having the "one Lord."

The unity of the Spirit is likewise a unity *of faith.* The true Church has but "one faith." As it has but one Lord, that faith which apprehends, accepts, confesses, and hopes in Him must be one and the same. It is not one thing to one and another thing to another, or one thing in one age or country and another thing in a different age or country. It is one and the same for all men and for all time; so that "unity of faith" is ever a prerequisite and characteristic of "the unity of the Spirit." It is by faith that a man is justified and has his life and standing as a Christian; but it is not a heterogeneous faith—a faith in this or that fancy or conceit, a faith which takes no account of what it believes and accepts for divine truth; but a definite, specific, ascertained faith, as given by the Holy Ghost in the authoritative, clear, and unalterable revelation of God. A man may believe in the Koran, in the Vedas, in the Book of Mormon, or in the many false theories of science, and be very sincere and earnest in his belief, but such a faith will never save him nor make a Christian of him. The Christian faith is a particular faith, and it is absolutely *one* the world over and for ever. It may more abound and be more full and accurate in the hearts and minds of some believers than in others; but it is still one and the same unchangeable faith in all; for if men have not this "one faith" they are not of the

community of saints and belong not to the household of faith. Both as to the truths embraced, and the character of the confidence with which they are received, all real Christians are one.

Still further, the unity of the Spirit is a unity *of official marking*. There is "one Baptism," which outwardly is the sign and seal of God's covenant to them that are His, and inwardly the offer and conferment of all the immunities of that covenant. To all who really receive and appropriate it, it is at once the Baptism of water and of the Spirit and the door of entrance into all covenant relations and blessedness, so that the apostle pronounces it "the laver of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost." Many receive it outwardly who never come into "the unity of the Spirit;" but, so far as we are concerned, no one truly enters the particular community of saints without it. "Baptism is necessary to salvation," and such a Baptism as is "not the putting away of the filth of the flesh" merely, "but the answer of a good conscience toward God"—such a Baptism as inserts into Jesus Christ, into his death as having died for our sins, for the drowning and putting to death of the old body of sin in us. Such a Baptism there is; and concerning it the Saviour Himself hath said; "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God" (John 3 : 5). It is therefore a vital thing, without which no one is a proper Christian. And by that holy washing all true Christians come to be such, and are united with the particular community of the saved.

Finally, the unity of the Spirit is a unity *of worship*. There is "one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all;" and that God, and only that God, do all Christians worship and adore. "For though there be that are called gods, whether in heaven or earth, to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in Him" (1 Cor. 8 : 4–6). There is indeed a tri-unity in the Godhead, but it is still unity. We worship the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, because the Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Ghost is God, and yet they are not three Gods, but one God; for the Godhead of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost is all one, the glory equal, the majesty coeternal. Such as the Father is, such is the Son and such is the Holy Ghost. The Unity in Trinity, and the Trinity in Unity, is the one only God. And in the adoration of this one God, who is "above all" as the Father, "through all" by the Word, and "in all" by the Holy Ghost, all true Christians are one, and therein complete their deepest oneness with Him and with each other.

Notice, then,

II. What this Unity of the Church requires of Us.

The idea of the apostle is not that God merely intends the Church to be one, and has devolved upon us the work and duty of trying to make it one, but that the Church in spiritual reality *is* one, made so by the Holy Ghost; and because it is one we are to

cultivate and try to preserve a temper and spirit toward one another accordant with our spiritual oneness in Christ, if indeed we be Christians. We are exhorted to walk worthy of the vocation wherewith we are called, endeavoring to keep, exhibit, and externalize the unity of the Spirit, into which all the true members of the one body of Christ have already been called and born, by honest endeavors to hold together in peace and concord in our outward relations to one another. The thought is not that it rests with us to make the Church one, but that, as the Holy Ghost has made it one, we as genuine Christians are thus put under bonds of obligation to try to maintain peace and good-fellowship with one another, and so walk worthy of the oneness in Christ to which we have been called and into which as true believers we have already entered. The apostle means and argues that, as Christians are really and truly one body, made such by the Holy Ghost in making us Christians, it is a great scandal and impropriety in us now if we do not earnestly exert ourselves to live in amity and peace with each other, so that our inward oneness in Christ may also appear in our outward behavior toward one another. Because there is unity of the Spirit, there should be unity in the external life and the practical putting away of every ugliness and uncharity that tends to break up fraternal concord and fellowship. Having become brethren in the sublimest of spiritual unities attainable by man, it is to be to us an inviolable bond to do what in us lies to keep the peace with one another.

But the apostle mentions particular traits and qualities to be cherished and exemplified in this striving to externalize the unity of the Church in the peaceful harmony of its members. As he gave a list of particulars in illustration of the one, so he gives a corresponding list in illustration of the other.

Lowliness is named as specially becoming Christians, and as deeply entering into the preservation of charity and peace between them. Nothing is more ruinous to the Church's quiet than an uplifted, pretentious, and vain-glorious spirit in its members. Where there is vaunting of self, proud inflation, and the putting forth of a certain loftiness which rates others as far beneath it, the bond of peace cannot long hold. There must be lowliness as over against the "minding of high things," the thinking that we are something, and the setting up of ourselves as models and standards for other people.

Meekness is placed in the same catalogue. This is not so much a soft and yielding disposition or a prudent bridling of a passionate nature, but humility and submissiveness in bearing ill-treatment, not taking offence, and quietly resting all things in the hand of God and His good providence. The wisdom that cometh from above is stern only for purity of faith, and beyond that is "peaceable, gentle, easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy."

Long-suffering is added, for without this it is not possible to keep the peace. Human nature is very weak. Its faults and errors are many. If any one

wishes to take offence, there is always plenty of opportunity to do it. A jealous, sensitive, and resentful disposition can find abundant occasion to keep itself in a constant ferment. And if people have not grace enough to pass by the thousand little causes of irritation and annoyance, to leave off stickling for their rights, and to bear with the frictions that are ever occurring, it is impossible to maintain peace and harmony in any community. Therefore we must put on that charity which suffereth long, is kind, and is not easily provoked,

"*Forbearing one another in love.*" In many things we all offend. At our best we cannot help it. And as we would have others allow for us, and not hold us to strict account in every little thing, so are we to allow for their infirmities, mistakes, indiscretions, and faults. No one is perfect, and the evil nature of which we all partake is hard to be brought under right control, and therefore we are not rigidly to note and resent everything that happens to go wrong or look unfavorable. This continual finding of fault and dwelling upon what does not please us, and retaliation for every injustice done us, is not a thing befitting Christians or promotive of good fellowship. Hence the apostle exhorts us to suppress it, to let alone what we cannot remedy, and to bear and forbear toward one another as love and charity dictate and demand; for only in this way can we keep together in that unity of external peace which is called for by that unity in Christ to which the Holy Ghost has brought us, if indeed we be Christians.

And to this the apostle very earnestly exhorts as

a thing so vital to our Christian character that it becomes very doubtful whether we are Christians at all if we do not earnestly strive to keep the bond of peace unbroken. The implication is that perfect and uninterrupted concord and harmony cannot be maintained, that offences will come, that breaches of brotherly unity will happen; but the requirement is for us to exert ourselves to the utmost, that the fault may not rest with us.

Nor is there a more powerful argument to move and animate us to this than that which the apostle here urges. If the Holy Ghost has really begotten us unto God, if we have really been born into the kingdom and family of God, if we have really been brought into the one body of the renewed and saved to share the eternal destiny of the saints, how utterly unworthy of the transcendent honor and relationship, and how glaringly inconsistent and out of place, to refuse to live in amity and good-feeling with any one who, so far as we can know, stands in the same heavenly relationship with ourselves, and with whom we are obliged to expect to live through all the eternal years? If we are not willing to be on fraternal terms with God's children here, how is it possible for us to hold fellowship in that deeper unity with them which is to be for ever? God pity the man or woman who proposes or claims to be a child of God, and to stand in the unity of the Spirit with all believers, and yet will not, except on terms of his or her own dictation, live in peace and charity with those who are quite as likely God's true children as themselves! I can conceive of nothing

more unseemly or more vitiating to any one's claim to belong to the family and household of the regenerated and saved. In the absence of renewing and sanctifying grace I can conceive how husband and wife may disagree and live in mortal hatred of each other; how children and parents might live in irreconcilable variance; how brothers and sisters and neighbors might fall out and for ever hold each other as enemies; but for people who have been begotten of the Holy Ghost, and claim place in the fellowship of the redeemed, to condemn and disown one another as outlaws from each other's regard is a thing quite beyond my power to construe. Either one or the other, or both, must yet be in the gall of bitterness and in the bonds of iniquity; for as no man can persist in hating his own flesh, so it is out of the question for one child of God to persist in rejecting and hating another.

Most solemn, therefore, is this exhortation of the apostle. Let us each, dear friends, take it to heart, and from this time forth set ourselves with fresh determination to walk worthy of the vocation wherewith we have been called, and strive with all the power that in us lies to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. It is duty, and with it all our cherished hopes are bound up.

Eighteenth Sunday after Trinity.

1 Cor. 1:4–9: I thank my God always on your behalf, for the grace of God which is given you by Jesus Christ; that in everything ye are enriched by him, in all utterance, and in all knowledge; even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you: so that ye come behind in no gift; waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ; who shall also confirm you unto the end, that ye may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.

God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord.

IT is a very unworthy conception of this apostolic thanksgiving to treat it as mere amiable rhetoric, meant to win attention and smooth the way to a favorable hearing. Such were among its effects, but never was there a purer joy or a more heartfelt expression than that which Paul here utters. Having labored hard and earnestly to convert these people from their idolatries and sins, it was his particular consolation and a subject of abiding gratitude to see and know that his efforts were not without fruit, and that a settled congregation of Christian confessors had been gathered in the midst of that dissolute city.

It was indeed true that many irregularities and defects still existed among them—evils which needed correction, and which were meant to be corrected by means of this Epistle—yet the testimony of Christ

had had its fruits. The grace of God had been manifested in the convictions of many, and turned them from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for His Son from heaven. It was, therefore, with honest joy that he wrote to them, "*I thank my God always on your behalf, for the grace of God which is given you by Jesus Christ.*"

We see from this that in the heart of Paul the unselfishness of Christianity had turned the world, otherwise so adverse to him and his cause, into a spring of perennial happiness. He had almost none of the ordinary personal enjoyments of life. Perhaps there never was another man who suffered so many things, and so constantly, for the Gospel which he preached. Whithersoever he turned he had the unvarying assurance that bonds and imprisonments awaited him. His whole life, as he himself attests, was a daily death. But he was not therefore an unhappy man. With all his adversities he still had a perpetual feast of satisfactions and delights. He had even got so far as to glory in his infirmities and to draw sweetness and pleasure out of pains and sufferings. And one source of his pleasure was that he did not labor and suffer in vain, that souls were brought to eternal salvation through his word and teachings, and that wherever he had sown some precious harvest sprung up to witness to his faithfulness and add to the blessed society of the redeemed. Though it cost him much to plant the churches he founded, and though he had to go through self-denial and tribulation which no mortal man would voluntarily endure for any other cause

whatever, yet when he did succeed, and was able to refer to men and women won to the Saviour through his word, showing by their lives that they had indeed and in truth been recovered from their sins and idolatries, it sent a gladness, rejoicing, and thankfulness into his soul in which he felt himself amply repaid for all his pains.

Nor is it easy for any one, not in the actual experience of it, to understand what a genuine happiness to a laborious and painstaking servant of God it is to see and know of some good fruit to his labors—that people are really profited and changed for the better through his self-denying endeavors.

But this gladness of the apostle over the conversion and enrichment of his Corinthian friends brings before us another and much more important matter. It presents a remarkable attestation of the power of the Gospel to change men. It would seem to be a very weak thing for such great ends as that of making man a new creature. And yet here is the demonstration of its power. Let us note a few particulars, that we may judge whether we have really come to these important Christian experiences.

1. The Gospel had convinced and satisfied these people of its truth. They had been heathen. There was nothing in their thinking or manners to dispose them to Christianity. It brought to them doctrines quite strange, and seemingly absurd. It also pronounced against them and condemned their whole manner of life. Its preacher was a despised foreigner,

with Jewish accent and Jewish manners. Outwardly considered, it had nothing to attract, but everything to repel. And yet it took hold upon them. There was a hidden power in it which penetrated their inmost being, and made way into their hearts and convictions in spite of all antagonisms and disadvantages. "The testimony of Christ was confirmed in them." It carried with it its own evidence by which it fastened on their souls as the very truth of God.

The same has been the case in all the history of Christianity. The Gospel does not need the elaborate cumbrousness of logic and argument to enforce it. People are not made Christians by these learned, slow-moving, and ponderous books and essays. Its strongest evidences are in itself. The simple story, fairly told, contains more convincing power than all the argumentation that has ever been constructed in its favor. Men can meet argument with argument, but they cannot so readily meet the simple but grand "testimony of Christ." This comes with an urgency and command which cannot be so easily evaded. With all the awkwardness, feebleness, and even repulsiveness, of the instruments by which it is handled, it has in it a divine force peculiarly its own, which secures a way for it where there would seem to be no possible hope for it. "The Word of the Lord is quick and powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit and of the joints and marrow."

What was it, my Christian brother, that convinced

and persuaded you to become a Christian? What was it that satisfied your soul and moved you to the confession of Jesus and the acceptance of Him as your hope? Was it any great argument or reasoning of man? Was it because all rationalistic difficulties were first cleared away by human investigation and logic? Was it not rather in spite of all such things that you came to the decision which has since controlled your life? I know that this has been the fact. And even to this day, if you were required to give the arguments in the case, you would find yourself puzzled to do it. You feel that there *is* argument, full and convincing. Nothing on earth perhaps could shake the convictions that live in you. But how they got there, and exactly what they rest on, you cannot fully tell. You know and are sure that Jesus is the Christ, and that He has the words of eternal life, and you accept and confide in Him as man's only hope; but the precise reasons for this persuasion, clear and strong as it is, you cannot satisfactorily give. You have the witness in yourself. It is *confirmed in you.* You cannot be mistaken about it. The thing is proven in your soul. Ay, it was a grand truth which the Saviour uttered when he said, "If any one shall do the will of the Father, he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God." It writes its own testimony wherever it is received, and it never can be fairly uttered to the human understanding without making its distinct impression, either leading to repentance and salvation or stirring up to resentment and greater condemnation. All who hear it, by its own

native force are at once made sensible that something momentous is in it, requiring to be fought with determined vigor or to be submitted to as true. It has its confirmation in men's own hearts.

2. The Gospel enriched these people in all utterance (or *wisdom*) and in all knowledge. It is indeed the key to all right wisdom. No one can really understand himself or life or the world, or his true relations to things, without it. It is essential to all right thinking and all just estimates of things. Without the Gospel, and the solution which it gives of the facts with which we have to do, a man is in the dark, embarrassed at every step, unable to construe anything correctly. History is an enigma, life is a riddle, death is incomprehensible, and man's position in the universe is an unsearchable mystery. The Gospel is an absolute necessity to all true philosophy. Without it nothing fits, and the more we know the less can we get our knowledge into satisfactory shape. It may be extensive, but it is confused, and cannot be brought into order until this central and formative idea comes in to bring the parts into harmony.

Hence, the man who truly takes in the Gospel is the best philosopher, the wisest man. His general knowledge may not be great, but he has hold of the central and controlling ideas. He views things in their right relations, and is able to talk of matters with a profoundness of wisdom and propriety which utterly puts to shame all the unchristian learning in the world. He has the seed-thoughts of all right thinking, which alone solve and explain life and

duty. He is in the proper attitude to take in things as they are and in their right connections and purposes. And so far as he has any power of thought or utterance every sentiment of his wears a justness and wisdom as wonderful as it is divine. Hence, also, even otherwise ignorant and unlearned men, who know not even the first rudiments of science so called, can yet instruct, direct, and edify the most knowing of men who have not learned to know God and Jesus Christ whom He hath sent.

This was specially observable in these Corinthians, though not in all things the best Christians in the world. Corinth was a place of much culture and enlightenment. It was celebrated for its polished and literary society. Aristides said of it, "At Corinth you would learn and hear even from inanimate objects, so great are the treasures of literature in every direction." The church of Corinth was therefore in close contact with people of great cultivation and knowledge, though itself composed of the medium and ordinary classes. And yet they had utterance and knowledge which outshone all the eloquence and wisdom which distinguished that city. And such is the constant and uniform effect of the Gospel wherever it is sincerely accepted. I know of instances in which men of renown for their learning and enlightenment have gone to their untutored Christian slaves for instruction, and learned for the first time from them to understand themselves and the true philosophy of life. Christianity enriches men in all utterance and in all wisdom.

3. The Gospel brought these people into fellow-

ship with Jesus Christ. It is the nature of it to make community between Him and us. It makes one with Him, as the child is one with its parents, as the wife is one with her husband, sharing in all his estate as well as his fond affection. What we have of debts and sins and infirmities Christ assumes and takes upon Himself; and what He has of holiness, righteousness, triumph, power, exaltation, and eternal right in heaven He gives to us and makes ours, and causes to avail in our behalf the same as if it were our own, making us joint-heirs with Himself to all the patrimony of God. For by faith in Him and trust in His Messiahship and promises we come to be viewed in Him, and He stands for us, and all His great possessions enure to our benefit along with Himself.

Fellowship with the Son of God! What depths of meaning and blessedness are in that expression! His dying the death, the answer for our deservings of death! His victory over death and hell, and session at the right hand of the Father, a victory in our name and behalf, in all the virtues and glories of which we share! And His sublime possessions, given Him of the Father as His most righteous due, all ours as coheirs and copartners with Himself, that where He is, there we may be also, and be like Him and with Him for ever! What a portion is here! And yet all this does the Gospel effect for those who open their hearts to it and in truth receive it.

4. The Gospel opened to these people a blessed outlook. It presented to their hopes a grand consummation to be wrought by the coming again of

our blessed Lord, and fixed their hearts upon it with devout and earnest anticipation. Paul testifies that they were "waiting for the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ," and thanked God for it as the proper attitude for all Christians.

We thus get at the true pole-star of the Church—the great central goal of primitive and apostolic Christianity—the grand light upon the farther shore by which the whole voyage of Christian life is steered. It is the same which rises up in all the writings of prophets and apostles, like a mountain in the midst of a plain, visible from all points and at all times. The apostles and early Christians were people not of one book, but of *one thought*, which served as the main spring of all their feelings and doings—the thought of the Lord Jesus sacrificed for our sins and coming again to bring the reign of sinless and eternal peace. This was their storehouse of motives to obedience, zeal, and holiness, and the sublime essence of all their hopes. Everything else summed itself up in this. And though the Church of our day has wellnigh dropped one part of it from her Creed, and some who call themselves Christians have renounced all expectation of Christ's return as a mere dream, it is now, as at the beginning, the real substance of all right faith and hope. Waiting for that coming, with what is necessarily involved in such a waiting, is Christianity, and nothing else is. It is the Gospel's true outlook, and full of thrilling joy and blessedness.

Nor need the believer fear as to his safe coming unto that glad day. Christ will confirm him unto

the end, that he may be blameless when the Lord cometh. God never begins a work without ample provision for its successful completion. As these Corinthians were "waiting for the coming of the Lord Jesus," and, as the result, were lacking in no gift, so Paul gave them assurance that there was no danger so long as they kept themselves to it. Temptations they would encounter, but a way of escape was to go with them. Trials and afflictions they would meet, but these would be so overruled as only the more to further them in their desires. Death might overtake them, but its sting was gone and no power remained for it to harm them. Doubts and fears might betimes afflict them, and their weakness might be great, but He who called them knew their necessities, and His grace was to be sufficient for them. Let come what might, they were to be secure in Jesus, and to reach the goal undamaged and undismayed. And such prospects does the Gospel set before all who really venture themselves upon it. Their hope is sure. "God is faithful."

See, then, what reason we have to be thankful that we have been made partakers of this grace. Paul thanked God continually that these Corinthians had received it; but how much more cause for thankfulness have the recipients themselves! If apostles, angels, and heaven are made glad in our joy, how much more should we rejoice and give thanks! Bless the Lord, therefore, for his goodness to you.

See also in this the motive to be diligent and faith-

ful. Such stupendous mercies call for suitable requital. The intent of all is to "keep us blameless unto the coming of the Lord Jesus;" and our aim should be not to miss the chance to be "harmless, the sons of God without rebuke."

And let this subject likewise remind us in Whom our strength is. He who has begun this work must also be the finisher of it. Our sufficiency is not of ourselves. God must uphold us or we fall, and He alone can confirm us unto the end. But He is faithful by whom we are called. He will never leave nor forsake them that put their trust in Him. Therefore hope in His mercy, and cast your burden upon the Lord.

Nineteenth Sunday after Trinity.

EPH. 4 : 22–28 : That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; and be renewed in the spirit of your mind; and that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.

Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbor: for we are members one of another.

Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath: neither give place to the devil.

Let him that stole, steal no more: but rather let him labor, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth.

TRUE Christianity, unlike its miserable imitations, is no mere outside dress. It is more than the whitewash on the sepulchre or the sadness on the face of the hypocrite. It is something deeper than the distinctions of family or caste. It revolutionizes man's whole condition. It reconstructs his life. It carries a new order of things into his entire being. It is a repetition of the Genesis of Moses on the theatre of man's moral nature. It is God speaking His potent word to the dark chaos of fallen humanity, saying, "*Let there be light*," *and there is light.*

Our Epistle tells us that a true Christian is a *new man;* that he has "put off concerning the former conversation the old man;" that he is "renewed in

the spirit of his mind;" that he has "put on the new man." These are very strong and very significant expressions. Nor are they mere empty verbiage. They mean something. They are inspired words, written to instruct and guide us, that we may not be content with the shadow without the substance, or flatter ourselves with the name of Christians whilst we are not such in reality. They are God's fingerboards set up by the wayside of life, from which we may ascertain where we are and what course to take in order to reach our proper home. They show us that every true Christian is a changed and new man. Let us, then, consider,

I. *In what respects and to what extent this is the fact.*

1. Certainly it is not the fact as respects the essential constituents of a man's being. Though he has put off the old man, and put on the new man, he still is the same man. If there ever was a true Christian, Paul was one. But Paul the Christian and apostle was the same Paul, as to his natural qualities and characteristics, who once persecuted the Church and kept the clothes of those who stoned Stephen to death. He had the same body, the same features of face, the same stature, and the same personal identity. He had the same lofty intellect, the same ready memory, the same power of utterance, the same daring zeal, and the same determined will. And as to all the essential constituents of his being he was the same Paul "*in Christ*" that he formerly was in unbelief and sin.

He was indeed a *new man;* old things had passed away and all things had become new, but not in such sense as to alter what God had made him as a human being. And no Christian is any more a new man than Paul was. And yet it is most significantly true that every Christian *is a new man.*

2. He is a new man in so far as he has put off his old manner of life, his former conversation, his previous style of conducting himself in the world. "The old man" in these respects is the man living without reference to God and Christ and a judgment to come. It is the system of activity begotten by and conformed to the carnal impulses which is condemned and to be put away. It is that vestment of godlessness in which depravity and sin clothes one. It is that careless, prayerless, indifferent, and sinful way of living, without thought of God and without concern about the soul or its redemption. No man can remain in that and be a Christian. So far as any one is a Christian at all, he has put off that style of things. He has ceased to live as he once lived—as if there were no God, no judgment, no eternal retribution, and nothing to care for but himself and his own ease and gratification. He has broken up his old sinful habits, and is no longer governed by his old lusts, but has broken with that corrupt and condemned method of life which was carrying him to perdition. In this respect he is not what he used to be. He is changed; he is new.

3. This is further true of him in that his mind

has become subject to a new impulse, giving a new purpose and a new aim to his existence. His heart has become awake to things to which he was quite oblivious before. He has begun to live to things to which he was previously dead. He hears and sees and feels and is convinced and moved as never while the old man had the sway. His faculties are the same, but they have gotten new light, which has awakened a new life and given a new direction to the whole bearing and aim of the man. Having put off the old man, the Christian has recovered again some due sense of God, and moves now with aspirations after God and desires to conform to God. The spirit of his mind has taken on a new bent, inclining him to new objects, showing the power of new affections. A deadening incubus has been thrown off from his moral nature. He feels differently, views things in another light, and lives for quite other and higher ends than he once did. In a word, he has put off the old man, and a new life has come into him, moving him to quite other laws of being. He is renewed in the spirit of his mind.

4. The same is still further true of him in that he now lives to righteousness and in a new obedience. Having broken away from the former bondage to sin and lust, he has come under the influence of another centre of gravitation. His aspirations now are upward, heavenward, Godward. Having found forgiveness in Christ, "whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report, if

there be any virtue, and if there be any praise," he now thinketh upon these things, and his soul goes out after them, and to them his whole affection and endeavor is directed. Faith, love, charity, humbleness of mind, and the whole vestment of the fruits of the Spirit now characterize his life and movements. Forgetting the things which are behind, he now reaches forward toward the things which are before, and presses for the prize, the crown of righteousness. Saul the self-righteous and bigoted Pharisee has become the penitent, humble, obedient, and patient servant of God and of his fallen fellowmen. The fierce persecutor has become the earnest and unfaltering confessor. The man of the world, caring nothing about God and living only as his lusts impelled, now is full of spiritual interest, denies himself, and keeps his body under, that he may not fail of the blessed resurrection of the just. What his hand finds to do he does with his might, adding to his faith, virtue; and to virtue, knowledge; and to knowledge, temperance; and to temperance, patience; and to patience, Godliness; and to Godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, charity; that he may be neither barren nor unfruitful. Lying and deceit he has put away, to speak the truth in all honesty. Malice, wrath, and unrighteous anger he has torn out of his heart, to give place for the graces of the Spirit. Instead of being led captive by the devil, he now resists him and gives no place to him. The works of darkness and dishonesty he has renounced entirely and for ever, and labors, working with his hands in legitimate and beneficent industry.

that he may have to give to him that needeth. Thus he has "put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness."

This, then, is the extent, and these the respects, in which a true Christian is *a new creature*. Let us now inquire,

II. *By what means this marvellous transformation is wrought.*

1. We may well suppose that it is not an achievement of man's natural powers. It is too spiritual, too mighty, too complete and vital a revolution, to be born of the flesh or to be a product of man's own unaided endeavors. Moralists have taught many good lessons; legislators have enacted many good laws; wise men have enunciated many excellent maxims; and orators and poets have declaimed with charming eloquence against bad passions and impiety. Their utterances have been engraven on stone and hung up in temples and proclaimed through the world. But nowhere and in no case have they ever wrought such a change as that which the text describes, and which is characteristic of the true Christian.

Lactantius once said, "Give me a man who is irascible in his temper, abusive in his language, headstrong and unruly, and with a very few words, the words of God, I will render him as gentle as a lamb. Give me a greedy, covetous, parsimonious man, and I will presently return him to you a generous creature, freely bestowing his money by the handful. Give me a cruel and bloodthirsty man;

instantly his ferocity shall be transformed into a mild and merciful disposition. Give me an unjust man, a foolish man, a wicked man, and on a sudden he shall become honest, wise, and virtuous. So great is the efficacy of divine doctrine that when once admitted into the human heart it expels folly, the parent of all vice. Did or could any of the heathen philosophers accomplish such important things?" Plainly, they could not. This moral transformation which the true Christian has undergone is far beyond all mere human power. Reforms and great changes are possible to unaided man, but no such spiritual metamorphosis as the text describes. This is something "new" to humanity—a *creation* superadded to fallen nature which can come only from the Creator Himself.

2. And yet it is not exactly a miracle. It is supernatural, as a miracle is supernatural, and the power by which it is wrought is the same power by which true miracles are wrought; but the mode in which that power is made to act is not by a forcible disturbance of the ordinary laws of mind or contrary to the man's own concurrence and consent. It is supernatural in its source, supernatural in its essential character, supernatural in its approaches and results; but it is not irresistibly forced upon a man against his will, nor brought about except in connection with the ordinary methods of enlightenment, persuasion, and human acquiescence. People are not coerced into piety nor dragged into the kingdom of heaven by some invincible constraint. The grace that comes to

them comes from above. It is what never could originate with themselves. It has a potency as purely superhuman as the power to raise the dead. But it does its work only by means of constitutional faculties already possessed, and with the consent of man himself. Both the putting off of the old man and the putting on of the new man are here spoken of as lying within the sphere of human duty, and as involving activities of our own, while yet the transformation is described as something which has its source and character in a new putting forth of creative power. It is indeed a new creation of God —a retouching and reinvigoration of the old, damaged, and dead machine of humanity by the Hand that made it, but only in such sort as to set it running without the destruction or the obstruction of its own original constitution. Man must still think and will and choose and act, and so co-operate, whilst yet the whole power by which he thus moves, as well as his inclination to the things to which he moves, is from above—a new and special and supernatural gift of God to which man in his own strength is a total stranger.

3. The exact beginning of this spiritual transformation is usually unknown to our consciousness. We know that it is wrought by the Spirit of God and that He is the direct author of it, but we cannot always trace the Spirit's operations. "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit" (John 3 : 8). There is mystery in it

But the Saviour tells us that the seed of it is *the Word*. So in the context the apostle connects it with hearing of Christ and learning of Him. It is *the Word*, the teaching of Jesus, the doctrine of the Gospel, which begets this new man. Hence Peter also speaks of Christians as "being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, *by the Word of God*, which liveth and abideth for ever" (1 Pet. 1 : 23).

The divine Word is not a dead, empty, and inert thing. It is "quick and powerful." It called the worlds into being. It fashioned the ages. All the living energy of God is in it. The Holy Ghost is embodied in its sounds. As we hear it, receive it into our hearts, meditate upon it, realize its truth, and by its illuminating and convincing power are impressed and moved, the process of new creation has effectually commenced. As we yield to it and trust in it and set ourselves to obey it as verily the Word of our Maker to us, our tastes are changed, new affections stir in our hearts, our entire life begins to shape itself to a new obedience, the old régime ceases to control us, the spirit of our mind is renewed, and we become new creatures, new men; while that which works the change is the Holy Ghost in the Gospel Word to which we have listened, and which we receive and cherish in our souls as the light of life. Of course the all-pervading centre and subject of that Word is the personal Christ. It is given for no other purpose than to present Him to the soul as our Lord and Saviour. Nothing is the saving Word of God which does not preach Christ

and Him crucified. "The testimony of Jesus Christ" is the Gospel, and we do not hear or receive the life-giving Word except as we hear of Christ and are taught to accept and confide in Him as our adorable Redeemer. But with the story of His incarnation and doings in our behalf preached into our souls, and made to influence and draw us as it is its nature and office to do, we pass from deadness to life and from the power of Satan unto God.

Let us inquire, then, still further,

III. *What are the uses to be made of this subject?*

All Scripture is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, and for instruction in righteousness; and this is no exception.

1. We may find here a very simple touchstone to test the genuineness of our piety. True Christians have put off the old man and put on the new man. They that are "in Christ are new creatures; old things have passed away, and, behold, all things are become new" (2 Cor. 5 : 17). Is this, then, our experience? Those old, corrupt, and deceitful lusts, have they been put away, laid off, crucified, and slain? That old carnal indifference to sacred things, and love of vanity, and greed of gain, have they been made to give place to a mind set to serve and please God? When the question is between Christ and the world; between the place of worship and the scene of pleasure and gayety; between the sacrament and the playhouse; between vain ease and gratification and the doing of duty for Jesus and His Church; between the calls of secular

interest and the calls to devotion and beneficence; between expenditures upon pride and fashion and expenditures for the holy cause of Christ and His saving Gospel,—which is it that draws us most and the more readily commands our interest, means, or energies? Brethren, you may think the test a severe one, but it is a true one, and as simple as true. If you have not put off, concerning your former life in worldliness and sin, the old man which is corrupt, and broken away from the power of lust, and given your heart to the business of a life which knows no law, no aim, no will but the doing of the will of Jesus, I do not know by what right you can hope or believe that you are Christians. And if you are not Christians in reality, I am equally at a loss to know why you should wish to persuade yourselves into the belief that you are what you are not. Meditate, then, upon this subject and see where you are, for there is nothing to be gained by hiding from one's self the real truth of the case.

2. The same may serve to show the infinite value of Christianity to the order, peace, and prosperity of the community. People build costly jails, and pay for expensive courts, and lay out great sums of money to keep up police forces, and consume their means to protect themselves against the bad passions of men, and even then are never safe in life, property, or honor. And far more liberally still do they tax themselves for purposes of mere secular and godless education, which without righteousness is just so much more power put into the hands of the devil, and the world is worse under it

than in days less lauded for their enlightenment. And yet Christianity alone will do more in a day toward making a man pure, honest, virtuous, and useful than all these costly appliances in a lifetime. Make men Christians, real, living, earnest Christians, and there will be no occasion for all this cumbrous and costly machinery.

There is nowhere on earth or anywhere within the reach of man such a civilizer, such a purifier to society, such an engine for the transformation of men into right livers and right workers, as the simple Gospel of Jesus Christ. Yet there are men who claim to be great friends of the popular good who will spend more upon one election than upon the religion of Christ in their whole lifetime, or upon one foolish and mischievous frolic than they would ever feel themselves justified in giving to any purposes of religion under heaven. Poor, deceived, shortsighted mortals! They have means and energy and time in abundance for what will not help, but for what will help they have nothing or next to nothing. If it is the nature and power of Christianity to transform men, as this text claims, and to make of them pure and honest servants of God and of their kind, why is it that people who profess such unbounded devotion to the public good will not take hold of it with the energy it deserves, and use and apply it as they can? *It is the thing.* It is God's own ordained remedy to set humanity right. It has ever proven itself competent for its purposes. And yet it is passed by, neglected, unused, and made of none effect, because people cannot af-

ford to give it the time and means and energies they freely waste upon what cannot avail.

Dear friends, let us bear in mind what Christianity can do and is ordained to do, and learn to estimate its preciousness and award to it the place in our attention and regard which it ought to have. Failing to give our hearts, influence, and means to support the Gospel of Christ, we put aside what alone can save our souls or regenerate this corrupt and disordered world.

3. Finally, this subject may serve to show us the great practical work of our Christian calling. What is the Gospel for if not to separate between us and our old carnal lives, and to join us to the company of those whose meat and whose drink it is to do the will of our heavenly Father? And what is the will of God but this, even our sanctification? God hath not called us to uncleanness, but to holiness. This, then, is our great business as Christians, to "put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt"—to "be renewed in the spirit of our mind," and to "put on the new man, which is after God, created in righteousness and true holiness." Untruth must be purged out from our words and hearts; malice and ill-temper must be suppressed; Satan and his works must be abjured; and he that has been making his way by fraud and treachery must turn himself to honest industry and beneficence. This is at once Christianity, morality, and the showing of spiritual life.

Twentieth Sunday after Trinity.

EPH. 5 : 15–21 : See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil. Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is.

And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit; speaking to yourselves in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord, giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ; submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God.

THE Greeks had their seven wise men, sages of the olden time, to whose sayings and precepts they paid great reverence, especially in trying times and cases of perplexity. By this means, doubtless, they were saved from many a folly and disastrous blunder. Nor has the need of special instruction and guidance yet passed away from the children of men. There is still much unwisdom, perplexity, and evil in the world. Much darkness and danger encompasses human thinking and life. With all the boast of our superior enlightenment, we also need counsellors as well as the ancient Greeks. The days upon which we have fallen are admitted to be evil days. Complaints and outcries come up from all quarters and in many forms. People are praying, lamenting,

experimenting, and casting about in Church and State for some way to something better. Matters in general are in bad condition, and the uncertainty as to what should be done is keenly felt. And fortunate is it for us that we have access to some wise guides from whom we may learn if we will. They are venerable counsellors, who can tell what has been in many generations. They are honest and faithful counsellors, speaking most where most is needed, and who never dissemble nor equivocate. They are much neglected, and by some despised, because they never flatter human pride and vanity and never minister to man's lusts and itchings; but they are reliable, true, never mistaking, never misleading. Those guides are *the Holy Oracles of our God.*

The seven verses now before us contain a special deliverance for just such times as ours. They are urged upon the Ephesians by the particular consideration that the days were evil. Those days were evil to the apostle, who was then a prisoner, and they were evil to the struggling church at Ephesus. Paul had some of his hardest fights there, and the dregs of those trials still lingered, whilst others had added themselves. Men had come there saying that they were apostles, but were not, whom the elders, as faithful overseers, had to withstand, and were commended of Christ for it. False practices and invasions upon the divine constitution of the Church had also crept in, concerning which Christ sent word from heaven by John that He *hated* them. The fervor and firmness which originally character-

ized the Christians there had likewise declined. There was serious deterioration among them, for which Jesus commanded them to repent, lest He should come upon them and take away the candlestick of their glory. In a word, *the days were evil.*

The text is therefore a special prescription for ill and trying times, particularly in matters of religion and the Church. And it contains a divine prescription. It has been given by inspiration of God and comes clothed with all the wisdom and authority of God; and it is written for our learning. So, then, let us take it, and seek to apply it to ourselves and our own surroundings. And may God help both preacher and hearers in the attempt!

I. "*See that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise.*"

There is a very plain path of Christian duty and life set before every one of us. We have been hearing of it these many years, learning it in the Sunday-school, reading of it in the Bible, listening to presentations of it from the pulpit, and seeing it in the lives of good men and women continually. It is that same old path wherein is the good way which all the apostles, martyrs, fathers, and confessors trod from the time of Christ till now. It has been laid out and marked off by God Himself, and admits of no modifications or amendments. It is the path which we all must travel if we would get to heaven. Many, indeed, refuse to put foot on it, and some care not to know anything about it; but all the redeemed walk there, and none ever come to the

heavenly Zion but by that road. Yet it is not so easy a way as one might think. Human nature is so perverted and sluggish that there needs to be a good deal of effort to travel it successfully. The eyes must be kept open, the attention fixed, and everything tempered with earnestness and care. There is great liability to mistake, to be misled, and to stray away, even when we think we are doing admirably. Hence the word, "*See that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise.*"

This is an important direction for all times, but especially for evil times. As long as the traveller's way is easy and smooth through the even meadows and plenty of sunshine, he need not be so particular about his steps. He may then look abroad betimes, and let his eye roam over the hills and valleys in the distance, without very great peril. But when the path becomes angular and uneven, and the rocks jut out into it, and the footing becomes slippery and uncertain, and the abyss yawns beneath, and the clouds overhang the sky, and the storm approaches, and the night comes on, and bewildering lights appear, the case is very different. Then a man needs to be cautious how he treads, what steps he takes, how he turns off his attention, and what he takes for granted. And such are the times into which the Christian pilgrim of our day has fallen, when nothing but the closest circumspection and thoughtfulness can keep him securely on his course. Considering how difficult it is for the most wary and diligent to keep the path, how the old landmarks have been broken down and obscured, what ills and

dangers threaten at every step, what plentiful vagaries and manifold conceits and falsities float about in the name of truth and piety like swamp-lights in the darkness, what passion, doubt, and unbelief, and fell mishaps, and apostasies, and tamperings with the old faith, and devices of men set forward in place of the ordinances of God, and stripping of divinity from things divine to put it on the merest works of human self-will, the flesh, and the devil, and the evils all augmenting and multiplying as time rolls on,—surely there is reason for keeping wide awake, watching on all sides, scrutinizing everything, with muscles strung for any emergency, lest the head be turned, the feet tripped, the heart deceived, the cause betrayed, and every hope destroyed. That flippant self-sufficiency which, like the butterfly, flits from flower to flower and field to field, sipping here and there and everywhere, wreathed in gayety and smiles, but without any settled aim, and only hollow where the backbone should be, is surely not the thing to answer for these times or to live out the year of such days as ours. In ill times, above all times, does it become those who would be Christians indeed to be strict constructionists, to stick close to the letter, to stand rigidly to the old landmarks, and to demand the written and authenticated "Thus saith the Lord" for every new proposal or device that presents itself, no matter in what guise of good or holy fervor it may appear. Indeed, this is the particularly emphasized point in this sacred admonition.

Alford has well observed that here "a double

exhortation is involved, the implication being, Take heed not only that your walk be exact, *strict*, but also of *what sort* that strictness *is*—not only that you *have* a rule and *keep to it*, but that the rule be the *best* one." People may walk very strictly and conduct themselves with great devotedness and zeal, and yet walk as fools, to no good purpose, because they have not gone deep enough to get hold of the right rule to govern in the case. Not only must we see to keeping the rule in force, but we must see that the rule itself is not a false, distorted, or perverted one. The cowardly argument that the old institutes of Christ and His inspired apostles cannot do the work any more, and the consequent bringing of human inventions and auxiliaries to help out the weaknesses and blunders of the Almighty; this construction of new carts as substitutes for the priests' shoulders in bearing Jehovah's ark; this readiness to surrender the old ship because she will not swing round for every spurt and breeze of popular fancy or self-lauding conceit or feverish fanaticism that may spring up,—are not what God requires in such times. It is not wisdom, when the war is raging, for soldiers to be straggling beyond the lines, to be creating diversions without orders, and in disregard of strict commands to try hazardous experiments of their own. When the stress of battle comes it is the time to look to head-quarters, to stand to the orders that come from thence, and to move only as the leader wills, without undertaking to change the plans of campaign, break up old brigades, and rally around irregular and non-

commissioned men according to our own notions and preferences. We are to see that we walk *circumspectly*, not as fools, but *as wise*.

II. "*Redeem the time.*"

Though the days be captives and prisoners to evil, they may be ransomed, bought back into days of good and blessing. The world's greatest trials and adversities have given occasion for some of the grandest achievements and sublimest triumphs. The sorest temptations often bring out the most heroic virtues and the most exalted victories. But in order to this we need to buy up with eagerness and seize quickly upon every opportunity to make a good and telling point. As we are under pressure to be so strict both as to our rule and our way of observing it, and as the perils are so great, we must at all costs of our own ease and comfort grasp fast hold of every chance to make the right impression and advance the right cause. Cowardly idleness, which lays its hands in its lap, dreading the storms and waiting for impediments to disappear, and unwise adventure which will carve its own opportunities and by its unbidden folly set the rocks a-rolling down into the way, only to be cleared off again at the cost of still greater labor, never can buy up time as here admonished. It is no gain or good for a man to dig out the underpinning of his house to build the upper stories. It is a poor way for the farmer to enrich his fields and increase his crops by throwing fences down and letting all the loose cattle in. Such people may think that they are doing smart things, but

time will show the silliness of their bargains. They only *sell*, not *redeem*, the time.

An expensive business often is this operation of redeeming the time. Even when the chance is seen, there is often a timid shrinking from embracing it because it involves risks and sacrifices. People may see and feel a mischief, and perceive full well what the remedy is, but that remedy may be so unpleasant to them, and they may be so incommoded with the trouble of it, that they would rather not shoulder the responsibility, and prefer to hold themselves back for the present, not considering that they are letting the golden opportunity pass, when they can only lament and regret their folly. Brethren, we must learn to act and to speak out when the occasion presents, or we become traitors to ourselves and to our Lord. Having the clear Word of our God, and a cause girt round on all sides with His specific commands, we are not to consult with flesh and blood. We dare not hesitate on account of the supercilious sneers or the sentimental goodishness of men. Though Pharisees scorn, and Greeks laugh, and barbarians shake their heads, and silly women of both sexes lift up their hands in holy horror, we must on, daring to be singular in the eyes of this false world whenever and in whatsoever the truth of God requires it. Though the feet bleed and the heart ache and the head swim as the perils thicken and the shadows deepen, we must on. And though it should be the great apostle Peter himself who gets wrong, rather than compromise the cause we must withstand him to the face as Paul did, and refuse to

give up one jot of the orders and institutes of our Lord. We have our commission; we know what it is; it is not disputed by any who acknowledge the truth; and if we are ready to void it, to shrink from its execution, to throw it up, to drop it just at the critical point, to surrender it even for an instant, to turn it over into the service of an unauthorized popular clamor which thinks itself wiser than God and truer than Christ, is to me anything but a redeeming of the time, and is a bad thing for evil days.

III. But, again: "*Be not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is.*"

Ill times are apt to dement even good and wise men, and to bereave them of their wonted discreetness and self-control. Perplexities come, and they are as if stricken blind, ready to be led by any one who proposes to take them by the hand. Just when wisdom is most needed, unwisdom is apt to be awarded the control at which it grasps, and all sorts of absurd and disastrous counsels prevail. But a Christian is not thus to give up his senses, let go his wits, and surrender all attempts at self-mastery, as if Almighty God had suddenly abdicated the throne of the universe. When ill times come he, above all men, is to bethink himself and know that Jehovah reigns, and that there has been no countermand of His plain Word and institutes. The direction is, *Be not senseless;* keep thy thoughts together; do not play the fool; but consider, calculate, and understand what the will of the Lord

is. Perhaps never since Paul lived has there been such a revival of *unwisdom* in all directions, and especially in regard to the Church, religion, and the spiritual interests of the race, as in our times.

On the one hand, we have much zeal for a free, liberal, undenominational Christianity—a religiousness without any defined religion, which goes about to convert the world and fabricate a millennium without a creed or Church or sacraments or ministry. Men who disown responsibility and acknowledge no fixed faith, mere latitudinarian mountebanks, everywhere challenge public attention as God's special messengers for the times and as the only men up to the times. Fledglings who have not yet mastered the first rudiments of Christianity, and crazed pietists who have never had a wholesome thought upon the subject, and canting orators who find it good to whitewash their business with religious notoriety, as if gain were godliness, put themselves forward, over against all established order, as the proper exponents of religion adapted to these days, and are accepted by many as models of practical devotion, while the press groans with accounts of their shallow doings, and the deluded masses look on and applaud and think, "This *is* piety—this *is* what the world needs—this *is* up to the times, the very millennial dawn!" And even so far has this broad-Church, non-Church, and even anti-Church spirit gone that it is not difficult now-a days to find men to whom a clubhouse, a communistic league, a secret lodge-room, or a prayer-meeting in a theatre, is a great improvement

on the humdrum Church of the past, and to whom any man-made ceremonies, flummeries, and sensationalisms are quite as heavenly, sensible, and efficacious as the holy sacraments of God. And yet, on the other hand, we have a heartless, ceremonialistic Churchism, which transmutes religion into mere formalities of guild, creed, or ritual, and is very zealous for the worn-out shoes and hats and coats and rusty linen once worn by the Fathers, gathered out of the garrets and cellars and ash-piles of other centuries, and hawked about by reverend ecclesiastical retailers of old clothing as the necessary garb of saints, the rejection of any rag or tag of which is regarded by them as treason against God and unionism with the devil. Verily, no greater unwisdom has ever afflicted the earth than that which tyrannizes in our times.

What, then, is the word of God's counsel to us? It is a direct, clear, far-reaching word: "*Be not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is.*" God has a will—an intelligent, intelligible, good, and holy will. It is written in the Scriptures, embodied in the simple laws and institutes He has given to His Church, and illustrated by the ages. It is not the language by which men express it. It is not the clothing of those who have lived it. It is not the tunes with which saints have sung it. It is not the gestures, the attitudes of body, the position of the eyelids, or the measure of intervals of breathing which were perchance exhibited by certain holy ones as the knowledge of it reached their souls. Still less is it the lawless crudities and conceits of our modern

reformers and evangelistics. It is not an external fossil, as some would have it, but neither is it an impalpable, fluctuating, unascertainable spirit, as others seem to think. It is something fixed, but not dead—something living, but not variable—something settled, but not ossified—something unchangeable by the changes of time, but diversified in its applications in particular ages and circumstances. It is God's eternal truth, to be ascertained from His Word and the testimony of His Spirit-led Church, embodied in His appointments, and meant to be lived into such lives as we have, amid things as we find them. God is the Maker of the times as well as of the faith; and His will is not the faith without the times, nor the times without the faith, but the one *with* the other and *for* the other—the faith and institutes of God applied to the times and made living in their life. This is the problem which each age must work out for itself. And when it is worked out and put into living form, that is "the will of the Lord." Whatever yet remains doubtful, this is clear, that the prescription for the health and safety of man in these evil days is not humanitarian philosophies and reforms, setting aside and depreciating God's house, sacraments, ministers, and disciplinary laws, but the ancient truth and institutes of God; not a fancied Holy Ghost apart from the written Word and the appointments of His sanctuary, but the only *Holy* Spirit, who expresses Himself in these and works by means of them; not mere religious sentimentalism, but a well-defined and intelligently-accepted faith and rule of life; not

what vaunting self-laudation may propose as necessitated by this super-exalted age, but what God hath spoken and ordained. Nor yet is it a Pharisaic antiquarianism which seems scarce willing to admit that the Holy Ghost can live in an age of banks, railroads, and free suffrage, or outside of a given tongue, or without the wooden shoes and suffocating walls and superannuated tyrannies and wornout tatters of other centuries.

IV. "*And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess —dissoluteness, debauchery, profligacy.*"

Evil days are apt to make drunkards. When the mind is harassed, and heavy hours come, and depression and exhaustion are experienced, men get impatient, and feel as if they must have something to sustain and relieve them. And too frequently do they go to the bottle for consolation, hoping to mend their sorrows by debauching their souls. Nor is it very creditable to this superlative age that it has not yet shown itself competent, with all its boasted enlightenment and progress, to put into force an adequate protection of itself against the temptation and damning power of the dumb bottle. Though every feature of a drinking-man's body, and every word that proceeds out of his mouth, and every stone and timber in his dwelling has a voice, and that voice ever cries, and that cry is, "*Woe to the drunkards!*" yet men will be so crazy and unheedful of all that is wise and good as to "tarry at the wine" and "go to seek mixed wine." Notwithstanding the crime, the suffering, the poverty, the brutality, the disgrace,

the wretchedness, the spoliations of homes, the desecrations of virtue, the debasements of manhood, the wastes of intellect, the degradations of body, the curses of time, and the damnations of eternity consequent upon it, yet people will allow themselves to go after rum and guzzle strong drink. Need I say that this is not God's, but the devil's, prescription for ill times, and that the devil's work it makes of it. Dissuading us from habits so ruinous, our God provides a better, purer, and sublimer consolation for the days of darkness and of trouble. The word is, "*Be filled with the Spirit*"—not the spirit of hell, but the Spirit of God. This is the true wine of consolation—the noblest restorative for fainting souls—the true comforter, joy, strength, peace, and blessing of man in his trials and griefs. And it can easily be had. God is more willing to give it than earthly parents to give good things to their children. It can be had for the asking—ay, for the simple taking. It has been poured out in abundance. Everything pertaining to the Church—its treasures, its possessions, its offices, its services—is stored full of it and surcharged with it. The Word is full of it; the place of prayer is full of it; the sacraments are full of it; the assemblies for public worship are full of it; every closet of devotion is full of it. It floats in the sunbeams, it breathes in our breath, it whispers in the silence, it compasses us whithersoever we turn. And all we have to do is to open our hearts to it, to take it in, to drink at the fountains of its impartation, to yield to its impulses, to obey its teachings, to give ourselves to its

leadings. This will give cheer and gladness for the darkest hour, and help all our infirmities. And this is God's special medicine for evil times.

But not only literal wine and literal drunkenness is here included. There may be a mental, spiritual, religious intemperance, intoxication, and profligacy too. There is no danger that men will drink too deep of the Spirit of God. They can never be debauched by the Holy Ghost. They cannot go to excesses in surrender to the power of genuine godliness. But there is nevertheless such a thing as religious debauch, a drunkenness of soul, a profligacy of emotion, which, however good-seeming, is not of God. It is a sort of religious fever, which men take on from the peculiar atmosphere around them, just as many took the gold-fever, the oil-fever, the late spasmodic temperance-crusade fever which we have seen going through communities and working so much mischief. We have religious epidemics, too, which kill their thousands and do unspeakable damage. The times are ill, things go badly, adversities thicken; dissatisfaction and discontent come in, and people are in deep exercise about themselves and about matters in general. Some new excitement springs up. Attention is arrested. Sensationalism is brought into play. The crowd runs. The fever is communicated. Weaklings are amazed at the new power that attracts such masses The reporters, the telegraphs, and the newsboys are set in motion. A spurious and lawless zeal is evoked. Cunning manipulators take the thing in hand. Good men and true are entrapped by the

seeming remarkableness of the movement, and are afraid to say an unfavorable word lest they should be found fighting against God. The churches must join in or be denounced and overridden. A miserable tyrannical and irresponsible fanaticism takes the helm of religious interests. There is no good any more on earth which does not chime in with it and obey its shallow and mischievous dictations. Hysterical people see wonders and experience heaven on earth. Men and women from the gutters, the brothels, and the ranks of the unwashed are suddenly transmuted into the leading religionists of the community. And so the thing goes on till the grand carbuncle runs itself out, and the suffering, exhausted cause of Christ is left to recover the best it can, while the main operators, full of honors, fame, and caresses, disappear to work up a like performance at some other place. This I call religious debauchery, spiritual drunkenness, a ruinous profligacy in sacred things —coming under the prohibition before us as not the thing to better evil times. It belongs to it to be peculiarly devout, prophetic, evangelistic, extraordinarily divine, the very tide-wave of heaven; but it is nothing more nor less than religious intoxication, unwholesome and to be deplored. Saul caught just such a fever when he met the singing prophets coming down from the heights of Bethel, and he boisterously joined in with them, so that the admiring proverb went forth, "Is Saul also among the prophets?" But it did not drive the devil out of him, nor prevent him from seeking to murder David, nor keep him from counselling with a witch, nor

deter him from dying a miserable suicide. It was only a sort of spiritual "spree," which had no good end.

V. Another item: "*Speak to yourselves in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord.*"

Here would be the place to speak of the power of song in evil times—not, however, so much as a machine for operating upon others, as a means of edifying one's self. There is a force in hymns and melody. They impart nerve, strength, comfort, and healing to the afflicted soul. Many a time the days were evil to David, but his harp and his songs contributed much to sustain and cheer him. And they have served to help and bless the Church in life and death in all ages since. Even Jesus, in his great griefs for the sins of the world, refreshed himself from this selfsame fountain. I cannot dwell upon this topic now, but it is one of God's directions for ill times that we should *sing*. Sing, therefore—sing in the sanctuary, in the home, in the solitude, and at every resting-place along the way of life. Sing with the lips, sing with the heart, sing with the spirit, sing with the understanding; sing psalms, sing hymns, sing spiritual songs; and ever sing, making melody in your hearts unto the Lord. It will do much to lighten the burden of ill times.

VI. "*Giving thanks.*"

How different is this direction from the world's way of treating troubles! When adversity was

heavy upon Job his wife exhorted him to "curse God and die." And whenever it goes ill with a man, there is apt to be some Job's wife about him or in his heart to impel him in the same direction. To tell him to give thanks he would take as an insulting trifling with his misfortunes. What! give thanks for being made a beggar, a cripple, a mere wreck upon the shores of life, cast out to rot between the breakers and foul weather? Yes, the word is, "*Give thanks.*" For what? "*For all things.*" Give thanks for what others have, should it be so that you have nothing. Give thanks that it is in your power to do something which God asks you to do. Give thanks for the good you had before the evil came, and which in your prosperity you did not half appreciate. Give thanks for the good you still have even with all your adversities. Give thanks for those adversities themselves, for they are from God and belong to His great plans to work your highest good. Thanklessness and ingratitude are among the ugliest of sins and are the most pervading deformities and griefs of our times. Everything now-a-days is seized and appropriated as a matter of course. People act on the principle that the world owes them a living, and a good one, and think when they get it they have hardly got their own. Nobody is to be thanked, and no obligations are felt for anything. Parents lavish their love and earnings on their children, and do for them with untiring patience and forbearance in sickness and in health, and it is all taken as a matter of course; scarcely a thought of real grateful obligation for it

is felt, and often only harshness, disobedience, and even cursing, do they get for their pains. A word of misunderstanding is apt to be enough to dissolve for ever the longest and most valuable friendships, and is often held to be sufficient to counterbalance all the benefits and loving favors of half a lifetime. And it would seem to be the common law that you have only to put yourself to inconvenience to advantage a friend in order to have him avoid you, speak ill of you, and treat you as if you were his particular dislike. I do not know why it is, but the facts you can judge of for yourselves. And especially toward the dear God above us, from whom we have all things, and toward His faithful servants who have worn out their lives amid straits and privations in serving their flocks, there is the strangest obliviousness to the bonds and claims of gratitude. Hell itself can hardly be less feeling in these respects than some men's hearts. Ingratitude, ingratitude, is one of the things that make ill times the harder to bear. Therefore, a special word for such times is, "*Give thanks.*" Remember favors and mercies, consider obligations, acknowledge benefits, cultivate gratitude—be thankful.

VII. And yet one other word: "*Submit yourselves one to another in the fear of God.*"

Ah, here we strike the root of nearly all the ills that make up the sum of evil days. The fear of God is not in men's hearts. His commandments are disregarded, and His curses are let loose. We would think that the divine judgments would tend

to moderate and harmonize things between man and man. When the thunders of the Almighty are rolling over a house we would suppose it a sufficient signal to hush the strifes within and to reduce the disorders at least to silence. But it is apt to be the contrary in fact. When the times are awry it is taken as an ample justification for the most unconscionable interruption of all bonds otherwise held to be sacred, and each one sets to work with a devilish will of his own, no matter who is hurt, what law is broken, what ties are riven, what works and fruits of ages of wisdom and prayer are sacrificed, or what treasures are destroyed. People think they see necessity, and necessity knows no law, and every restraint is cast off and trampled in the dust; while hearts else considerate and tender grow hard as the scales of Leviathan, and the God-defying spirit of hell takes possession of them without exciting so much as a thought that they are the least out of the way.

But this is not the style in which to deal with evil times. First of all must come back a deep and pervading *fear of God*, a holy dread of His displeasure, a right regard for His Word, institutes, and authority; and with that will come a recognition of the fact that others have rights and feelings and interests and claims to be respected and cared for as well as one's self. How the several states and relations of life would thus be affected is explained in detail in the after parts of this chapter; but the sum of all is that each one would be duly awarded what pertains to his place and sphere, and that each one

in his place and sphere would fulfil the royal law of charity, remembering who it is that hath said, "Vengeance is mine; I will repay."

This trampling down of one another's rights; this setting aside of official prerogatives given, authenticated, and sealed of God; this setting up of new orders, new commissions, and irresponsible activities over against what has been constituted and settled of God, and over against what, after all, must be depended on as the only safeguards and abiding stabilities,—does not savor of that spirit of submission springing from the proper fear of God which Paul prescribes as the right thing for evil days. There are wives who must not usurp the headship of their husbands, and children who must not set aside the honor and authority of their parents, and servants whose business it is in singleness of heart to obey, not dictate, to their employers and masters; and so with regard to every office, every sphere, and every relation which God has ordained. And if people have not godly fear enough to recognize, respect, and submit themselves to His constitution and order, there is no goodness, no zeal for the salvation of souls, no plea of need, no fervor for the cause of righteousness, no sanctimony of profession, no magic of eloquence, no vote of crowds, no array of blessed results, which can exempt from the divine disapproval or from the divine judgments. God is God, and He cannot contradict Himself. God is God, and He is to be feared and reverenced in everything which He has ordained. God is God, and they who have no fear to invade

His constitutions, though they may flourish in the favor and praises of men, will one day find to their sorrow that they have been most fearfully mistaken.

Such, then, are God's counsels for ill times. Let us learn to reverence and observe them. We never can be the losers by following such counsellors.

> Happy the man who wisdom can obtain,
> And getteth understanding. 'Tis a prize
> Far better than the silver's merchandise,
> In value greater than the latent vein
> Of sparkling ore.
> To him that dares, unmoved by timorous fear,
> Hold her with firm and steady grasp, she'll prove
> A tree of life.

Twenty-first Sunday after Trinity.

EPH. 6 : 10–17 : Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.

Put on the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.

For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.

Wherefore take unto you the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.

Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breast-plate of righteousness; and your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace.

Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.

And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God.

CHRISTIAN life is set forth in the Scriptures under a variety of figures. Sometimes it is a voyage on a turbulent sea, with contrary winds, darkened sky, and many hidden dangers. Sometimes it is a journey through an unfriendly country, in which we are pilgrims and strangers trying to make our way to the home-land of rest. Sometimes it is a foot-race for a prize, with severe and trying competition, requiring painful discipline and the intensest exertion to win. But here is still another figure, picturing Christians as warriors grappling with powerful enemies. These enemies are not invincible. With

Jesus as our Captain, and using the weapons at our command, we may overcome them and make our way through them; but the Church on earth is militant, and must "fight the good fight of faith" in order to lay hold on eternal life.

The truth of this representation is manifest in all the history of the Church in the past and in the experience of every genuine Christian. When Christ came in mortal flesh, it was to raise here a new banner, to start a new kingdom, to set up a new dominion in this world over against the usurpations which had taken possession of it. In rallying to this banner and kingdom we necessarily come into conflict with the opposing powers, and cannot hold our position without making a firm stand and doing much hard fighting. The victory is assured if we are determined, manful, and courageously dutiful; but we cannot have it without long and serious war. And what I now propose is to point out something of the nature of this conflict by noticing,

I. The Adversaries to be Encountered;
II. How to Meet and Overcome them.

As to the first particular, the text lifts the veil and gives a remarkable view of these enemies. The apostle states that our wrestling is not only "with flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places." These words describe a vast empire of spiritual powers We may not be able to identify all the

various grades and natures; but the reality of their existence, activity, and power is plainly affirmed as a thing beyond question. There are bad angels and evil spirits as well as good ones, and they are all in confederation against God, against Christ, and against all that belongs to Christ and His kingdom. There is a certain order and concord among them. They are organized and active in a common cause of spoliation to God's works, beneficent purposes, and redeeming grace.

Why God has allowed such evil beings and governments to have place in His universe we may not be able to explain to every one's satisfaction, but the fact remains and rests on evidences which cannot be overthrown. We cannot believe the Scriptures of truth or explain the condition of the world without accepting the doctrine that we are in the midst of a great kingdom of darkness, officered and operated by spiritual powers antagonistic to God and all good, having varied access to the hearts and minds of men, and whose instigations, influences, and embodiments for the detriment of human well-being Christians must meet, resist, and overcome.

The apostle's words imply that these spiritual adversaries are multitudinous and of many orders. They include "principalities," "powers," "rulers," "wicked spirits in the air." On whatever principle of delusion or coercion their kingdom is organized and maintained, a vast and mighty empire and confederation in wickedness is described. We know that Satan is at the head of it—an apostate angel of eminent faculties and strength—and that under

him are worlds of lesser spirits, demons and graceless beings, who do his will and fulfil his commands.

These adversaries are also very subtle. They have wiles and cunning. They are under the lead and inspiration of high intelligence and long experience. They have great strategic ability, and are capable of transforming themselves into seeming angels of light to deceive and ruin souls. Satan is among the most astute and sagacious of creatures. His depths are marvellous. His tactics are difficult to understand, and his deceptions are the most plausible that perverted intelligence can frame. And a corresponding subtlety pervades the whole empire which he governs and inspires. Coarse and defiant rebellion, blasphemy, and shameless wickedness are most accordant with their temper and spirit; but when this would shock and alarm they are given to the most subtle disguises and all sorts of machinations to deceive.

And what adds to their dangerous power is that it is spiritual and hidden. However it may embody itself outwardly, the animating spirit and the real operators are invisible, and cannot be met or hindered by material weapons. What of their empire and doings comes out into the sphere of the visible world is often so veiled that even practised eyes can scarcely detect the wicked and ruinous intent. It is hard enough to deal with open and manifest foes, but it is the more difficult to guard against stealth, ambush, and hidden treachery.

These adversaries have also been accustomed to great successes. They have triumphed on many a field, conquered kingdoms, deceived the world, ruled

the nations, and held dominion for ages. The greatest kings, cabinets, and legislatures of the world have been, and still are, largely under their control and management. The most powerful superstitions, corrupt religions, and false systems of thinking which have influenced mankind in all the ages have taken their complexion from these hidden powers of evil. John said in his day that the whole world was then lying in the bosom of the Evil One. Everything relating to the condition of things on the earth was in the devil's interest and derived its ardor and warmth from his foul spirit. And it is much the same to this present. There has been some impression made for the rightful King of the world, but for the most part the devil is its lord and god, and the great mass of its population are his subjects, ruled and animated by his evil genius. It is not possible that it should be so always, but as regards the past and the present these enemies of God and our salvation have had great success, and have such pride in their gains and possessions as to be very stubbornly malignant in the defence of them and in seeking to keep out whatever opposes their usurpations or disowns their infernal rulership.

And they also have various allies and instruments in making themselves felt to the hurt and damage of those who would be God's true people. The pomps, fashions, and maxims of the world, the corrupt flesh and depraved natures which all the children of men carry in them, with various moral weaknesses, ignorance, lusts, and bad passions which come of the depravity that is in man, are so many influences in

league with the great enemy, ready to spring to his help and service at his call. Science, literature, government, those great powers in the world, are prone to lend themselves to the devil's will and purposes. As iron filings are attracted by the magnet, so there is much in every one of us that has affinity for the devil's spirit, ready to take him and cleave to him rather than to God and good.

And these adversaries are very active and persevering. Satan is ever lying in wait to deceive. He is incessant in his wiles. He never tires in varying his plans and tactics. He "goeth about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour." His emissaries are everywhere. There is no assembly even of the sons of God into which they do not insinuate themselves, or an earnest and ardent soul which they do not labor to possess. They work in the counsels and hearts of kings, invade the most sacred sanctuaries, try to befoul the purest imaginations, and strive to turn the most honest purposes to evil. There is scarce a day or an hour in which we do not meet with some Satanic assault to try our virtue, shake our faith, and bring us into spiritual peril. At no time, at no place, in solitude or society, are we free from the presence and attacks of these subtle, malignant, and infernal powers.

These, then, are the adversaries with whom our wrestling is, and with whom we are obliged to contend and strive if we would be true to God and make our way to heaven. The resultant conflicts are often very severe. The Church is brought to straits and adversities under which it is scarce possible to stand

up. Christians are tried and shaken so as to be on the point of falling irrecoverably. Evil men and seducers wax so strong that they sweep almost everything before them. Unbelief, doubt, falsehood, and apostasy have their tides, when they become the fashion and impregnate the whole atmosphere of society with infidelity and atheism. The evil days come. The truth of God seems to lose its power. More souls are seduced from it than won to it. Christians begin to question their own faith, destroy the old landmarks, and make common cause with unbelievers. Worldly conformity becomes so strong as to rear itself aloft even in the sanctuaries of God. Everything is so confused, shaken, and overflooded that it is hardly possible for honest minds to keep their footing or to find their way to righteousness and truth. Piety is hissed as antiquated superstition. Godliness is stigmatized as a craze. Positive truth is obscured by demands of evidences and demonstrations which the nature of the case excludes. Suggestions of possible explanations, purely imaginary, are made to take the place of what is otherwise evident and sure. The foundations of knowledge are weakened by arguments of sheer agnosticism. The reputation and genius of people who set up their dicta for truth, and put their powers of ridicule in the place of solid reason, are sufficient to counterbalance the weight of the most evident certitudes. And so unbelief, selfishness, greed, and vanity reign, and the children of God have a hard time to maintain themselves in faith and genuine godliness. Notice, then,

II. *How we are to meet and overcome these subtle antagonisms.*

The text gives the answer: We are to take to us "the whole armor of God." Every need and emergency has been duly provided for. There is no lack if we are willing to use the armor made ready to our hand. The ability to withstand in the evil day, and, having done all, to stand, is here, if we are only so minded and follow the directions of our Commander. But we must take to us the *whole* armor of God.

This "armor of God" comprises numerous articles, some *defensive* and some *offensive*. Both kinds are enumerated in the context. The defensive are the most numerous and the most important; for our present conflict is not so much for the destruction of the enemy as to stand and maintain ourselves during this evil day. We are naturally so exposed and open to attack and deception that our defences are the main thing and of first consideration. All our senses and means of knowledge are but so many avenues through which Satan and his emissaries may approach us and do us fatal mischief. We must therefore be prepared to defend ourselves, and be duly arrayed to keep the enemy at bay, although weapons for aggression and the making of inroads on the powers of darkness are also necessary.

The first article named by the apostle is *the girdle of truth*. The ancient military girdle was made to bind tightly around the loins, to strengthen and brace up the body and serve as a support for weapons. And so we are to "stand, having our loins girt

about with truth"—not only with truth in general, but with the particular truth which enters into the make-up of Christian character. These Ephesians had "heard the Word of truth, the Gospel of their salvation," and in the earnest holding and confession of that as their reliance and hope they were to stand. They were to wear it tight around them as a girdle to strengthen them, keep them braced up, and hold their armor to them. They were not only to be girded with evangelic truth objectively considered, but as practically embraced and earnestly followed. There was to be truth in their holding of the truth—*sincerity*, honesty, fulness of devotion to, and dependence on, the truth. This was to steady and strengthen their walk and work as Christians. If we drop or relax that girdle, or be indifferent about the verities of the Christian faith, we become weak, open to surprises, liable to attacks for which we are not prepared, and so to be overcome and vanquished. Mere sincerity is no safeguard; it must be sincerity in the holding of the pure Gospel truth. The heathen may be sincere, and yet be led captive by the devil, as they certainly are. Their sincerity is no help to them so long as it does not take the Gospel truth, in which alone is salvation. Neither can we be safe, however sincere, if we do not embrace and hold that truth as our sure dependence, hope, and principle of life. But, habitually girding our loins tight and strong with the truth as it is in Jesus, we have one of the principal protections against the wiles of the devil. From this we derive strength, consolation, and weapons to

stand against deception, mistake, and what otherwise would fatally expose us to the cunning power of the enemy.

And with the girdle is to be *the breastplate*. The ancient θωραξ was in two parts—the one to cover the front and the other the back. And as the warrior thus encased himself in solid plates of iron or brass, so the Christian needs to be encased in "righteousness"—not his own righteousness, for Satan's fiery darts would soon pierce and riddle that, but the strong, perfect, and impervious righteousness of Jesus. In that war in heaven as John saw it, when the Dragon and his angels fought against Michael and his angels, the latter overcame "by the blood of the Lamb." Christ is our righteousness, and by His obedience unto death we have justification from our sins and stand accepted before God. If we had not that to stand for us and to look to, we would soon be overwhelmed and could not so much as lift up our eyes unto heaven. But, encasing ourselves in the merit and righteousness of Jesus, there is no opening for Satan's missiles to find entrance for our hurt or condemnation. We need our own righteousness too to show and prove that we have truly embraced Christ and are being fashioned to His likeness; but it is only the merit and virtue of Christ, put on as the θωραξ to cover us on all sides, that can protect us in the day of trial and conflict against the accusations of the devil.

Shoeing of the feet is another important thing. The ancient warrior provided himself with brazen boots and thick soles to protect his feet and lower

extremities, so as not to be disabled by the ruggedness of the way, the wounds of thorns, or the strokes of projectiles. And thus we are to have our "feet shod with the preparation of the Gospel of peace." Christianity expects us to use our feet to stand upright, to go about as Christ's servants; and there is nothing to lighten duty, protect against footsores, and keep us vigorously on our feet, as the peace and comfort which come to us in the Gospel. These take the points from the thorns, the sharpness from the stones, and the hurt from what would otherwise hinder and disable. It is Satan's policy to make the way of the believer rough and hard, to afflict and torture him, and thus to turn him from his path. The seed of the serpent is ever wounding the seed of the woman in the heel. And it is only the peace and blessedness given and proclaimed by the Gospel that can take away the annoyance of these afflictions and enable us to keep our footing, so as to "run with patience the race set before us." Therefore we need to be shod and prepared for afflictions by the deep experience of the sweet peace and consolations contained in the Gospel. This will smooth the way, however rough and thorny, and turn into non-effect all the disheartening sorrows Satan may interpose.

Above all, we are to take *the shield of faith*. All other armor is deficient without this. Faith is the spring and the strength of all other graces, and it supplements and completes them all. As the shield covers and protects over and above every other protection, so faith helps out over and above every other thing in Christian life and character. It cannot be

exchanged for anything else, nor can its place be filled by any other article. Without faith it is impossible to please God. Without faith the eternal realities cease to affect and command us. Without faith the most ennobling, invigorating, and triumphant principle of human life and action fails us. We must have faith, or we cannot come to justification or to any fitness for heaven. Wonders have been wrought through faith and confidence and trust in God; but where that is wanting Goliath's might cannot save him and all the defences of the soul are broken down. Therefore we must have "the shield of faith wherewith to quench the fiery darts of the Wicked One." The moment a Christian begins to doubt and cavil upon any point of the divine Word or administrations, the moment our grasp upon the divine promises and help becomes relaxed, the moment confidence in truth and in the power and grace of our Lord and Saviour flags,—strength becomes weakness and safety vanishes. Faith subdues kingdoms, works righteousness, obtains promises, stops the mouths of lions, quenches the violence of fire, turns the edge of the sword, strengthens in weakness, renders valiant in fight, drives back the armies of the aliens, and renders tortures, mockings, scourgings, bonds, imprisonments, temptations, death, and all adversities as though they were not. It is the great shield of God to protect and defend us whatever ills or trials may come. Where faith is, there is victory.

And with this shield there is likewise a *helmet*. The soldier needed armor for his head as well as

for his chest and feet. Hence the crested helmet, at once an ornament and a protection, the warrior's proudest possession, his crown, his mark, his glory. But the Christian's helmet is not a thing of brass or iron. It is made up of the most precious purchase of the Saviour's blood. It is the exalted and costly treasure of salvation, in which the sinner can lift up his head from all sin and condemnation and stand erect as a citizen of the heavenly kingdom, a child of God, wearing his Father's name upon his brow. One reason why the powers of evil get such damaging and disheartening advantage over some Christians is, that they do not sufficiently realize the certainty and fulness of salvation in Jesus Christ. They believe Him to be the Saviour, able to save unto the uttermost all that come unto God by Him, but they do not appropriate Him as surely *their* Saviour, in whose blood their own sins are cancelled and in whose blessed mediation their own salvation is assured. They see the whole work complete, perfect, availing, certain, but do not take it up and put it on as verily *theirs*, and availing for them now and infallibly. They hesitate and doubt, and do not stand up with the feeling and confidence that they are redeemed and saved people. Paul could lift his head in triumphant challenge, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea, rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress,

or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom. 8 : 33–39). This was the putting on of "the helmet of salvation." And herein is the joy and triumph of the soul against all that the subtlety and power of demon confederations can do to afflict or destroy us.

And yet one further article is named. It is both a defensive and an offensive weapon. We are not only to withstand the enemies of our souls, but we are to assail and drive them. And both for the withstanding and the driving we need this further weapon, "*the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God.*"

A mighty instrument is the Word of God. It is spoken of as a fire, and as a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces. Nothing can withstand it. Elsewhere it is described as "quick and powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the divid ing asunder of soul and spirit and of the joints and marrow" (Heb. 4 : 12). As David said of the sword of Goliath, so may we say of this "sword of the Spirit:" "*There is none like that.*" There is no more powerful instrument on earth. Everything must yield to the Word of God. Heaven and earth will fail sooner than one jot or tittle of the

divine Word. To have that with us, and to handle it well, is to be master of the field.

But we need to grasp it firmly. Satan is adroit in wresting Scripture. He is expert in quoting and misquoting it, perverting its truths and substituting his own mimicries in its place. Some of his most gigantic mischiefs are those wrought by false Scripture and falsifications of the true. All teachers of heresy, all false prophets, all false doctrines, and all the damning lies which have come in to deceive, debauch, and ruin mankind have come from him and his wicked instigations. He even betimes puts on the guise and garb of superior saintship, holy reforms, and various improvements on the old institutes and appointments of Heaven as a very apostle of light, progress, and human perfectibility, parading the most sacred texts and feigning the holiest of inspirations to wrest the genuine "sword of the Spirit" out of our hands. Hence we must be well skilled in the science of God's holy revelation, that we may be able to detect the deceits and tricks of the devil. If he comes with an "It is written," we must look to see what he has dropped out, hold him down to the true reading, connections, and intent, and be prepared to answer his "It is written" with our "It is written *again*," requiring one to be construed with the other. Many are overcome and led astray because they have not sought to ground themselves in God's Word and have not trained themselves in the handling of this "sword of the Spirit." Both for repelling Satan's temptations and assaults, and for actually destroying his

works and power, there is nothing like a courageous and confident use of God's Word. Nothing can so effectually answer and confound him as one clear text. As long as we rest on our own reason and argument he is pleased, but when we confront him with God's Word he cowers and departs. He cannot stand before "the sword of the Spirit." He likes human philosophy, but he hates Bible texts. His element is darkness and deceit, and when the pure light of divine truth is turned upon him he shrinks and cannot abide it. Nor is there anything so effectual to the pulling down of all his strongholds. Yes, what we need for right inspiration and victory is this mighty "sword of the Spirit." With this Word the Church has triumphed in the darkest hours, and must ever triumph. And whatever temptations, trials, or ills may come against us, with this weapon from the Holy Ghost we may hew our way through them to everlasting crowns.

This was the weapon Jesus drew against the tempter and with it drove him discomfited from the field.

This was the weapon St. Paul drew, and the cities of the Gentiles shook, the demon oracles were dumb, the magicians burned their books, the throne of the Cæsars trembled, and the gods and goddesses of the nations tumbled from their heavens.

This is the weapon Luther drew, and kings and courts and emperor and pope, however combined against him, were powerless, the world was moved, and a new era dawned.

And the same is ever the weapon of almighty

power to break all superstition's bonds, to mock the rage of the heathen, to disconcert the allied kings of mind and state, and to hew down the pillars on which the dominion of the aliens rests. And if only we learn to take and use aright, and trust with confidence in, God's everlasting Word, our victory is sure.

This, then, makes up in full the Christian warrior's panoply. Equipped with these, we are invincible.

Thus, then, let us be careful to put on the whole armor of God, that we may be able to stand, and, having done all, to stand. It is our privilege; it is our duty; it is our highest glory. All the saints in heaven are the living demonstrations that all the powers and confederations of hell cannot avail to defeat those who array themselves in this armor of God. Then let us not fail to put it on, that with Luther we may sing,

Though devils all the world should fill,
All watching to devour us,
We tremble not, we fear no ill;
They cannot overpower us.
This world's prince may still
Scowl fierce as he will;
He can harm us none;
He's judged, the deed is done;
One little word o'erthrows him.

Twenty-second Sunday after Trinity.

PHIL. 1 : 9, 10 : And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment; that ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ.

IN religion, as in everything else, the natural tendency of man is to go beyond the bounds of moderation and right judgment, and to fall into extravagances, unbalanced views, or erroneous conceptions in all manner of directions. Hence the religion of some people is made up of nothing but violent affections, emotions, raptures, ecstasies, and that of others is nothing but exterior performances, rites, ceremonies, church-going, reading prayers, doing penance, counting beads, or other mere routine formalities. With some it is a mere intellectual affair, a cold mental knowing, learning, and understanding, without regard to anything further. To know the catechism well, to be able to talk theology, and to be ready with arguments against skepticism and heresy is their beau ideal of a Christian. But with others it is a simple goodishness, which makes nothing of creeds or churches, and satisfies itself with pious frames, grand excitements, loose sentimentality, too weak even to take on any definite shape. The hearts of some are tender and

their passions fervent; the temper of others is frigid and wrought with difficulty into anything like warmth or zest. In all such cases there is manifest defect, misjudgment, lack of balance, and what we may call extravagance, though in very opposite directions.

One of the most unfortunate of these distorted conceptions of religion is that so frequently shown as even to mark eras in the Church, which makes Christianity nothing but doctrine, theology, a system of theses and anti-theses, a round of mere objective things or specific statutes—a legalistic orthodoxy which counts all men heretics who do not subscribe to every jot and tittle it lays down as belonging to the *corpus* of truth, but is very dull in obeying it itself. There cannot, indeed, be too much stress laid on purity of doctrine. We are justified by faith, and faith must have something which it believes, and that which it believes must be the truth. If we have not the truth of God on which to fix our faith, all the believing we can do will not save us. But there is such a thing as orthodoxy without charity, a holding of the truth in unrighteousness, a crabbed scholasticism of faith—a punctilious and severe exactness with regard to the articles, items, and proportions of the faith, but without the spiritual life and power of Christianity. People of inquisitive and speculative turn are in great danger of taking theology for faith, of substituting dogmas, theoret ical subtleties, and Pharisaic niceties for Christian purity, and of thus transmuting religion into dogmatism, malignant censoriousness, and heresy-hunt-

ing, or into a system of dead theorems and opinions which may play about the head, but impart no warmth to the region of the affections.

Now, man is constituted of something more than intellect, and religion is something more than theology and confessional tenets. Nor is it the amount and clearness of man's knowledge, logic, and understanding that most moves and influences him. There is not a human being living but knows a great deal better than he does, or who is not conscious every day, if he thinks at all, of going the very contrary of his better sense and judgment. It is not reason, but *passion*, that controls the world. Even much that claims to be conditioned by the purest intelligence and soundest logic is, after all, but the offspring of some passion lying unseen behind it. And when we consider what an important part of our constitution inheres in the affections, and how potent they are in determining character and life, it is absurd to suppose that God has given us a religion capable of saving us and of making us His true children in which the affections are not concerned full as much as the intellect.

Brethren, it is a necessity, and the sooner we learn it the better, that we must have *passion* in our religion. The life of the great Model, Christ Jesus, was as full of passion as it was of truth. Even the truth, with Him, was more the truth and brightness of *feeling*, *life*, and *spirit* than of dogma, creed, or theory. Nor can there be any right or saving Christianity into which the warm and living affections of the heart do not enter. And if they enter at all, they

must enter largely. If God is to be loved, He must be loved ardently and supremely. If Jesus, though invisible, is that Friend which the Scriptures represent Him to be, there is due Him an attachment stronger than death. If the soul is worth anything it is above all valuation, and no earnestness for its security can be too great. If the interests of man stretch beyond this present life and through an eternity of existence, it is impossible to be too much moved, anxious, and alive in all the springs and impulses of our being in looking after and taking care of those interests.

I dare not, therefore, shrink from saying, with all point and plainness, my friends, that if you have no heart, no relish, no pleasure, no satisfaction in devotion, prayer, and the worship of God, I must question your piety and consider your religion a failure. If you have no feeling sense of your sins, your unworthiness, and your lost condition without Christ, I must doubt the genuineness of your penitence and humility. If you have never felt the luxury of doing good, of being loving, kind, and true, I can have no confidence in your generosity or the reality of your being fashioned in heart to Jesus Christ. And if your soul never warms to the Saviour who died for you, and your nature never kindles with the glory of the Christian revelations, and your heart never glows with joyous, living gratitude, admiration, and love toward Him who has so loved us, I must conclude that you know nothing yet aright of the religion of the Gospel. Men have passion in everything else. They have

passion for wealth, for position in the world, for learning, for honor and appreciation among their fellows, for political interests, for friends, and for much less worthy things. And how can it be possible for them to be genuine Christians without passion for Christ and His service, for truth and good, for perishing souls, for the Church, for the favor of God, and for the blessed things of an eternal heaven? Hope, desire, joy, sorrow, gratitude, compassion, zeal, are all affections which work mightily in the human breast, and they must likewise be in living activity in every one truly born of God. Even anger and hate, when they flush and burn against untruth, meanness, wrong, and the things which God hates, must have their place and influence in genuine godliness as they had in Jesus Christ.

But, above all, is that prime, potential, and all-comprehending affection referred to in the text—the worthiest and best of all the passions—which we denote by the word *love* or charity. It was this especially which Paul wished to develop and strengthen in all those to whom he ministered. And he here writes to the Philippians, "*For this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment.*" As Christians they had love, but as growing Christians they were at the same time to grow in love, and abound more and more in this blessed passion toward God, toward the good of men, and toward the blessed things of the Gospel of Christ. And it is to be the same with us.

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Love, or charity, is the very jewel in the golden ring of Christian graces and affections. The whole law is fulfilled in it. It is the great substance, end, and ripened fruit of faith and all Gospel requirements and inculcations. It is the bond of perfectness, the hoop which holds the cask together, the keystone which binds and upholds the entire arch of living Christianity. Without it, all other attainments, professions, doings, or possessions fail of their purpose and cannot avail for our salvation. The words of Paul on this subject are among the plainest and most positive, as well as among the most elegant and expressive, in the Bible: "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity"—or the true spirit of love—"it profiteth me nothing." That is to say, everything fails where love is wanting. The Gospel itself, and all the great gifts that accompany it, go for naught to the soul in which there is no kindling of the passion of love.

It is well to note, however, that it is not a thing which we can create at our own will and pleasure. Love, of no kind, can ever be forced. It is a thing that comes, not a thing which we ourselves make. We may indeed do something in the case; we can

entertain and foster it, or we may resist it, cast it out, and stifle it, but we cannot make it. Hence the apostle here speaks of it as a thing in which God has a hand. He does not lay it upon these Philippians as a mere duty of theirs, but he looks to a higher power, and prays it upon them from above.

Love is never exactly one's own. Though we exercise it, we do not originate it. We sometimes speak of making the fire, but our making is only the arrangement of the materials and conditions and the application or fanning of the coal or spark, which we do not make. In reality, God makes the fire, and we only encourage, apply, and feed it. And so with love. We do not produce it, but only learn it. We do not create it, but simply receive and nurture it.

The first thing in the work of our salvation is simply to receive. God makes the start; He does the creating; He first approaches us and exercises His love toward us; and when He has thus preveniently come to us and awakened in us a consciousness of His presence and good-will, our part is only that of accepting, receiving, appropriating, cultivating. And so in regard to this passion of love. "We love Him because He first loved us." The affection on our part is the product and fruit of something going before on God's part, and can only be kindled by His grace to usward. It can come in no other way. But, rightly apprehending God's goodness in Christ Jesus, and learning to appreciate and trust in His love to us, and yielding ourselves to Him as He who above all deserves the

supreme place in our hearts, love is begotten in our souls, and this holy passion kindles and burns.

To have and abound in Christian love it is necessary, therefore, that we accept and entertain God's gracious approaches to us, and learn to embrace and cleave to Jesus Christ as our Lord and Saviour. There may be philanthropy, patriotism, friendship, interest in the welfare of our fellow-men, and great devotion and self-sacrifice in what is true, noble, and beneficent, but it is still not that genuine Christian affection which can only exist where God's grace is fully accepted and submitted to, and where there is a new birth from the Holy Ghost, making us participants in the divine life and nature. There may be a beneficence which very closely imitates, and in some directions even rivals, Christian charity, which yet is nothing but a subtle selfishness. It may be simply a bid for credit among men—a show for some ulterior personal ends—a sheer self-flattery to have a good opinion of our own excellences—a mere bartering of one commodity for the securement of another. It is not genuine love, for no more than a corrupt tree can bring forth good fruit can a true Christian charity exist in the heart of man unrenewed by the grace of God in Christ Jesus.

To have Christian love we must first be Christians; and, being Christians, we must needs have charity or our Christianity is a mockery and a lie.

In common with other Christian graces and affections love is a matter for cultivation. Though born along with our spiritual renewal in Christ, and dependent always upon the presence and influence of

the Holy Ghost, it needs to grow, to be nurtured and exercised, to be educated, trained, enlightened, that it may direct itself wisely. It may be neglected and misused. It may weaken and die. It may go forth with such unwisdom as only to damage where it should bless. It needs to be cultivated and nourished, that it may not wilt and cease to be; and it must be instructed and directed, that its motions may be salutary and wholesome. A perverted and misdirected love or beneficence is even worse than selfishness. It betrays more, and it is capable of working more powerful ill. A selfish man is like an iceberg, and no one cares to come near him. There is an instinct which teaches good-meaning people to beware of him. But love always has an attracting power, and persuades and draws to itself. It is something that opens hearts and inclines to fellowship and communion. And if unwisdom be in it, it gives just so much more currency and power to error and falsehood. A parent may love a child to its ruin, because the impulses of that love are not directed with discretion; and so Christian love, if not tutored or instructed, may destroy and debase by the very goodness which it improperly pours out. Like some animals, love is born blind, and needs to get its eyes open in order to handle itself usefully. Mere loving without discrimination sinks to a very debased and repulsive passion. It must be taught to direct itself to right objects, to centre upon what is deserving of it, and to order the manifestation of its impulses so as not to betray and destroy its own goodness

Hence the apostle prayed that the love of these Philippians might abound more and more "*in knowledge and in all judgment.*" A blind love, which has no just estimate of things, which has no sense, which makes no discriminations, which takes to its embraces every one and everything alike, is not the sort of love the apostle wished to have abound. In earthly relations free lovers are not the most reputable or useful to society; neither are they in the higher relations. Passion is not to go out to all in the same way, nor to everything as if there were no differences to be made. Not mere love, but *judicious* love—a love that knows what it is doing, a love with a sound discrimination and a wise judgment—is what the apostle wished to see developed and increased.

The man who loves error the same as truth, and gives his hand to perverters and spoilers of the Gospel the same as to true believers, and shows the same devotion to trifles, accidents, and minor things as to the great central essence and heart of religious matters, exercises a very mistaken affection, and ruins more by his ignorant and perverted goodishness than all his principles are capable of rectifying. He lacks in that "knowledge" and "judgment" which the apostle here singles out as the emphatic point in his prayer.

Nor can there be the slightest question that the religionisms of our day need a great overhauling and reconstruction in order to realize what the Holy Ghost thus indicates as a most necessary quality in the make up of true Christian charity. The

charity which men most talk about and most laud and practise is, on the one hand, nothing more than a levelling and destroying free love, which overleaps all right and necessary distinctions—a miserable debauchery; or, on the other, it is a mere selfish and bigoted super-exaltation of one's own notions, family, sect, party, or person into the place of the great commonwealth of the saints. What we need for the regulation of our zeal and charity is discretion, judgment, right discrimination. We must have not simply warm and sympathizing hearts, but the devotion of our benevolent sympathies and favors to proper objects and with wise and prudent fittingness. He that makes friendship and love with a villain becomes partaker of that villain's criminality, and drags down his own good to that villain's level. He whose zeal makes no difference between God's appointments and commands and men's presumptions, arrangements, and pious pretensions, compromises himself with impiety and worships the devil under the delusion that he is glorifying God. And he who bestows his favors and charities without considering what it involves and whither it tends, does more mischief by his supposed goodness than the niggardly self-worshipper whom he would shame and condemn. Not love alone, but love abounding "in knowledge and in all judgment," is what true Christianity requires—not passion alone, but passion wisely directed, passion centred on right objects, passion regulated by judicious intelligence and discrimination. And in this, above all, it is that the apostle would have us more and more abound.

To develop such a love it is necessary, first of all, to concern ourselves about the truth—to get clear ideas of what it is and of its supreme worth. There is nothing like truth. There can never any good come out of falsehood. It is useless and absurd to think of doing good by means of lies. If we mistake the truth, we miss what alone can sanctify us or link us to the God of truth; and to give our sympathy and favor to untruth is to compromise with the worst enemy to man's peace or God's glory. True charity must therefore seek the truth, value the truth, and always have in view the interests of the truth, otherwise it only furthers the miseries of men by lending sanction to what can only ruin them.

Where there is no love and zeal for truth there can be no right Christian charity, for only the truth can profit and bless. If people care nothing about what they believe and rest in as their hope, and have no interest in what others believe and rest in for salvation, they let go the great saving good, and cannot exercise a true affection or a real availing charity. Of what profit can it be to a man to be helped, comforted, and cheered on in a course which has its termination in perdition? All the sympathy and beneficence invested in such an one is not only lost, but turned into an instrument of his surer ruin. The sublimest work of Christian charity is not simply feeding the hungry as such, clothing the naked, and ministering to the earthly comfort of the distressed, but, pre-eminently, the practical laying hold of God's saving truth, the bringing of it to bear upon the spiritually starving, and the awakening of a right

interest in that blessed Saviour and glorious heaven which the Gospel preaches.

Nor can this be without being ourselves thoroughly imbued with the spirit of faith. We must know and feel what poor, erring, sinful, and lost creatures we are, and how utterly hopeless is man without that free, unmerited, and matchless mercy of the good Father in heaven who gave His Only-begotten to satisfy for our sins and to bring us out of our miseries. We must know and feel it as a living truth that there is no name but that of Jesus given among men whereby we can be saved. We must know and feel it as an unchangeable verity that all the abiding and the only real good of every breathing mortal hangs on the crucified Son of God and faith in Him. And only with these truths burned into our inmost heart and welded to our deepest being as part and parcel of ourselves can we develop and exemplify that balance and wisdom of genuine Christian love and spiritual passion in which the holy apostle wished so earnestly that all his readers might abound.

Twenty-third Sunday after Trinity.

PHIL. 3 : 17–21 : Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample.

For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ : whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things.

For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ : who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.

IT sounds almost like egotism, self-consequence, and unsavory conceit for the apostle to admonish people to be followers of *him*. Ordinarily, we are not accustomed to hear such language except from the lips of Christ. But we have only to consult some of the preceding verses to see how far the noble apostle was from any pride or undue self-exaltation, and how much he felt his weaknesses and imperfections. The utterance of the text is intended for quite another purpose than that of putting forward himself. He wishes rather to set forth the positive certainty of the way of salvation, and to assure his readers that in following his example and teachings they were certainly on the right road to eternal life. He knew that he had found that road, and that there could be no mistake in taking it and walking in it.

And it is one of the particular glories of the teaching of the holy apostle that he not only points out the way with his lips or his finger, but by his whole example and entire life—that he not only tells us what we are to do, but goes before us in that doing, and bids us do as he does, and not only as he says.

If you were at Chamouni in Switzerland on some bright summer morning, you might perhaps see a line of human figures, like specks against the snow, slowly winding their way, one after the other, far up the sides of Mont Blanc, through a wilderness of crags, glaciers, and rocks, to reach the top of the snowy peak which blazes in the glorious sunshine. If you could see them nearer, you would observe a stalwart guide at their head leading off with firm and confident step, quite at home among those cliffs and precipices and yawning chasms, and knowing how to direct the way amid the perils of the ascent. One end of a strong rope is girded tightly about him, and the other end extends back to the next man, and the next, and the next, so as to bind them all together for their mutual protection. All move on with cheerfulness and courage amid the frowning dangers, because each has confidence in the guide, and is thus joined to him by this one common tie. If any one in the rear cannot see or hear the leader in front, he can still hear or see the man next before him, and direct his way by the movements and word of his nearest companion, and be sure that he is right because all are bound alike to the common guide.

Thus it is with Christians in ascending the hill of God to reach the sublime heights of heaven.

Through the ice and snow and rocks and dangers of this wintry world they move along, one after the other. The trusty and knowing Guide that goes before is the blessed Lord Jesus, who has made the ascent and knows every foot of the way. To him all are attached by one common cord of faith. He first gives the word, "*Follow me.*" Next after Him are the prophets and apostles, full of His Holy Spirit, confident in His leadership, and repeating the word of the blessed Master, "*Follow me.*" Then come the Fathers and confessors and ministers of Christ, walking in the tracks of those who have preceded, each repeating as he ascends the slippery steep, "*Follow me.*" And so the successive generations as they pass keep on shouting to others in the rear, "*Follow me.*" The one helps and guides the other, while all are led alike by the one great Leader, who is at once the Author and Finisher of their faith.

Thus, then, we are to ascend the glorious mount. The way lies through many perils and frowning dangers. In our own wisdom and strength we could never find it or make a success of our attempt. We must take the Guide who understands the path and can safely direct us amid the difficulties to be encountered. That Guide is Jesus, who goes before and breaks the way, and bids us follow. And on His wisdom, experience, and directions our whole trust must be implicitly fixed.

But He is far in advance. He is already on the heights beyond the clouds, where our weak vision cannot see Him, though His word we still hear

sounding from on high. Others, however, are in the same line, and not so distant. Them we can easier see and hear, and so learn how to move, where to step, and how to order our going. We have the tracks and records of the Bible saints to show the way, for they moved only as the trusty Guide led them. Among these stands the illustrious author of the text, repeating to us from the great Guide Himself to follow him, letting go everything in the world below, forgetting the things that are behind, stretching forth unto the things that are before, and ever pressing for the mark of the prize of our high calling. Still nearer to us in the line are the Chrysostoms and Augustines and Ambroses and Bernards and Taulers, whose tracks, though sometimes indistinct, and voices, though often feeble, we can see and hear, and learn wisdom for our toilsome task. And nearer still is that eminent servant of God, our own great Luther, whose marks upon the world are so distinct and deep, and whose sonorous voice rings out in such loud and clear echoes of the words and directions of Christ and His apostles that to him, above all in these later times, does it become us to listen, that we may guard against the dangers he has pointed out and plant our feet upon the solid rock which he so faithfully cleared of the rubbish that had covered it, and keep to the one old path which he so marvellously trod himself and reidentified for all who would come in safety to eternal life. And yet nearer still are fathers, mothers, and beloved pastors whose walk we have seen and whose earnest instructions dwell in our memories, though

they have already passed up where we see them no more. Following these, as they followed Christ, and taking good heed to their pious counsels, we may be sure that we are on the right path, and, persevering in it, shall come in our time to the same glorious heights which they have reached. Marking their walk and following their steps, it will not be long till the loud salutes announce our task achieved and our triumph complete.

Thus, then, the apostle would have us hear the voice of Jesus, and look to those who preach and follow Him and move on after them, climbing, toiling, panting, struggling, ever onward, ever upward, to the home of purity and brightness.

And to animate us to this he mentions sundry very important considerations.

One is the sorrowful and afflictive fact that the great multitude of men make no attempt to reach anything higher than the gratification of their own ease and appetites. The apostle looks abroad upon the world, and the scene presented brings the tears to his eyes. He looks upon families, and there he sees fathers and mothers, whose days are fast passing away, living only for this world, with no God but their own carnal likes, no preparation for eternity, no prayer, no aim, no hope beyond the things of earth and sense. Around them he sees children growing up untaught in the knowledge of salvation, without Church, without fear of God, without provision for their immortal souls. He looks upon the churches, and there he sees multitudes who hear the Word of Jesus and understand their duty, but

never give themselves to any serious earnestness about their salvation.' They listen to the Gospel, they see others setting out to obey it, they behold one little company after another arranging themselves in line to make their way to heaven, and now and then they glance upward with a sigh, but never once join the line of pilgrims to the heavenly heights. Their carnal indolence, their selfish ease, their worldly temper, their fondness for their own fancies, pleasures, amusements, and pursuits, preoccupy them; and all the expenditures of preaching, prayer, entreaty, and endeavor to bring them into the path of life fail to move them. He looks upon the common mass of this world's inhabitants, and lo, they are the enemies of the cross of Christ, hating the very name of religion, minding earthly things, worshipping their lusts and appetites, glorying in their shame, and drifting down the rapids to an inevitable destruction. And to think what sad work all these are making of their precious lives, what love of God and His servants they are despising, what a ruin they are making of themselves, what eternal blessedness they are trampling beneath their feet, causes the tears to fall upon the parchment as he writes, and intensifies his entreaty that his dear friends at Philippi may not be like them. Because so many are astray, the motive is all the stronger for those who would be saved to be resolved, circumspect, and earnest. Human nature is ever disposed to run with the multitude, to take on the ways and manners of the community in which it is, to imbibe the spirit which most prevails about it;

and the danger is that even those who mean to be true to themselves and their God will yield to the spirit of the world and make a wreck of their salvation. The apostle would have us think of this, and with tears beseeches us not to allow ourselves to be drawn aside by the fashions of the unbelieving multitudes around us. He would have us know and realize that all such are on the way to death, and that if ever we would reach heaven our course must be different from theirs, and our whole heart be set in following Jesus and His people up the steep ascent of the only way to glory.

Still another thought to inspirit us in these holy efforts is, that, having joined the pilgrim band, we are registered for quite a different destiny from that of the unbelieving world around us. "Our citizenship," says the apostle, "is in heaven." Something has happened to separate us from *earth's* ordinary population and to connect us with quite another realm. Christians belong to a different kingdom from any pertaining to this world. They are here among men, but they are here as strangers and pilgrims, whose home and country are elsewhere.

There has been an opening of the heavens over us. The Son of God has been manifested in our world. He has lifted a standard here and started a new and heavenly kingdom. He has sent out His messengers for the gathering of people under His flag as citizens of His new spiritual State. And, having taken Him as our Lord and King and pledged fealty to Him as our Captain and Sovereign, we are

no longer rated with the children of this world. We have renounced it and joined ourselves to quite another company. Henceforth we are citizens and compatriots in another and higher commonwealth. Our home-place and civic rights are in another country—that is, a heavenly. By divine grace we have an acknowledged status and standing in a supernal realm. Our proper King is in the celestial heights, and to those same heights He is engaged in leading and bringing us. For the present we are on earth, mixed in with these earthy populations, but our great Captain and Leader is conducting us out of it. By His Word and Spirit He is at work to lift our thoughts and affections, and set them on things above, whither He has gone. As His followers and people we have no inheritance in these perishable earthly scenes. Our names are on the roll-books of a celestial fellowship, entered there for an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven. This world's attractions, interests, glories, and kingdoms are all vanishing things. They must end and disappear. We cannot long enjoy them if we would. They are no proper portion for the soul that must presently leave them for ever. Proud as men may be of them, they are only temporary and fading. The largest fortunes and the grandest estates in this world will soon be nothing to those who now possess them. But there are other and better riches and estates to which our Lord would bring us—thrones, crowns, kingdoms, and pleasures for evermore. These have solid and enduring sub-

stance; they abide eternally in the heavens. And for these all Christians are booked. To them, through grace, our right and title is. And this is what the apostle would have us feel and know, that we may order ourselves accordingly, turn aside from beholding vanity, lift our eyes to the eternal possessions, and press on in the pathway of ascension to enjoy them for ever.

And a very potent consideration should this be to us. As we belong to heaven and the heavenly kingdom, it is our business to be looking and struggling heavenward. We have no right to be counting and calculating for this world as our home, for it is not our home. Our friends, our fortunes, our highest privileges are above, in the heavenly country. Why, then, be living as if they were here in this poor and perishing world? If we were sure of some great fortune, honor, and place awaiting us in a foreign earthly country, we would not waste time in drudgery and humiliation here. We would be off in the next steamer, and nothing could keep us from going to possess our treasure and estate. And so, with all the imperishable privileges and blessings of an eternal citizenship, dignity, and fortune laid up and waiting for us in heaven, nothing in this world should hold us back from the most determined efforts to reach them. Cheerfully and courageously should we follow in the line of toiling pilgrims bent on reaching those glorious heights.

And still another inspiriting consideration mentioned by the apostle is, that He who has called us, and is seeking to marshal and direct us for this sub-

lime ascension has arranged everything for our successful instatement into our proper blessedness. Though invisible, He is at the helm of things, Head over them all for the advantage and triumph of His toiling Church and people. All power in heaven and earth is His, whereby He is able to subdue all things unto Himself. It matters not what the hinderances or disabilities may be, or how impossible it may be to mere human strength to climb such steep and rugged heights. He is master of the whole situation, and conducts a "mighty working" by which the path will open for us and our footing in it be made sure, if only we are brave and determined to follow on and use what powers we have with due earnestness and courage.

We have prone and heavy bodies to drag along—vile earthy bodies, full of natural corruptions, humiliating necessities, craving appetites, and clogs to the will and spirit that would ascend; bodies that often grow weary and faint and rebellious against the higher aspirations of the soul; bodies that cry out against the hardships of the way, the difficulties, the self-denial, the crosses and the toil; bodies that drag us down and hold us close upon this filthy earth; bodies that are not at all fit for the world after which we are directed to aspire; bodies that are ever tending to death and corruption, and not toward spirituality and heavenly glory. These we have to drag along as putrid corpses which we scarce have strength to move, and cannot be rid of. But for all this there is ample arrangement by which everything will be turned to our advantage and triumph.

The thorn must be endured that the power of Christ may be the more exalted. And in due time this vile body, and all the burden it may be to us, will be changed and made like unto His glorious body. He too was once the subject of these same humiliations, privations, griefs, and sorrows. He hungered and thirsted; endured hardships, lashes, bruises, blows, mockery, wounding with thorns, mangling on the cross, and dark and dreadful death. But it was no loss to Him. He had power to reverse all and to ascend to the right hand of the Father, victor over every adversity and possessor of glory everlasting. And that same power by which He came forth from His humiliation exists to work a like triumph for every one of His faithful people. When He left this world He said He was going to prepare a place for us, and that He would come again to receive us unto Himself, that where He is there we may be also. Hence the apostles and early Christians walked with uplifted eyes looking for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, pledged to come in His mighty working to change mortality into life, to swallow up death in victory, and to bring everything into subjection to Himself for the everlasting peace and glory of His people.

Meanwhile these present disabilities, ills, and pains can work us no disadvantage. They are under His control and regulation. They belong to His economy for bringing us to the greater glory. To carry such a weight, and to triumph with all, has in it a sublimity which could not be had we been exempted from the painful pressure. Death itself will only

make the victory more marked and the honor the more transcendent. And, with all the pains and drawbacks which can possibly come to hinder, everything is complete in Christ for an abundant entrance into His everlasting kingdom. More than this we cannot ask or demand. And therefore with good heart and unfailing cheer we should on, allowing nothing to prevent our joyful answer to our glorious Leader's call, saying, "We come! Blessed Jesus, help us! We come! Thy Word we hear. Thy apostles, saints, confessors, and all who walk as we have them for ensamples, we follow. Fathers, mothers, companions, instructors, and all who journeyed with us here, but have crossed the flood, whose tracks we see, whose words we remember, whose sweet counsels and encouragement we feel, we follow. And in their footsteps treading, though faint, we pursue, our hearts and aims and hopes all set upon those sunny and everlasting hills."

Onward, dear Saviour, lead;
Upward our journey speed,
To Thy glad rest.
Uphold us by Thy Hand,
Till, in the glorious land,
Our thorn-pierced feet shall stand,
For ever blest.

This world is dark and drear;
We have no home-land here
Amid these pains.
Our home is in the skies;
Thither we lift our eyes:
God help us reach the prize
Where Jesus reigns!

Twenty-fourth Sunday after Trinity.

COL. 1 : 9–14: For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; that ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God; strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and long-suffering with joyfulness; giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son: in whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins.

CCORDING to the heathen fables, Minerva sprang from the brain of Jupiter full-grown, full-armed, and perfect from the very first. It is not so in nature or in grace. In everything there is growth, progress, development from small beginnings, and a gradual approach to perfection. There is first a seed, then a leaf, then a stalk, then a flower, then the ripening fruit. There is first a birth, then expansion from one stage to another until maturity is reached. Nor does any one come from the operations of the Holy Ghost in sudden maturity of saintship. Justification, forgiveness, and birth into the kingdom of grace do not admit of degrees, since no one is ever only half justified, half forgiven, or half born. But, having been born, our

eyes may be only half open, our senses only half awake, our strength and stature only the feeble indication of what we are intended to become. The contemplation in every birth and planting is that there shall be a gradual unfolding through successive stages to a certain perfection. Where this does not occur the whole process is thwarted and life becomes death. And this idea of growth and progress in Christian life and attainment is the one most prominent in the text now before us. Three things are here presented:

I. A very Hopeful Beginning;
II. An Earnestly-desired Progress;
III. A very Blessed Consummation.

God help us to profit by the consideration of them!

I. The Hopeful Beginning.

The apostle is remarking on the spiritual condition of the Christians of Colosse. They were personal strangers to him. They had received the Gospel from some one else. But they had really received it, as Epaphras informed the imprisoned apostle, and they had made some encouraging advances in Christianity.

They once were heathen. At least the majority of them were born and bred Gentiles, and as such belonged to the kingdom of the evil one. But they were now "delivered from the power of darkness." The light of divine revelation had come to them, and they embraced it, and turned from their idols to

serve the living and true God. It was a great and blessed deliverance. We sometimes forget what an illuminator the Gospel is. To it more than to anything else under heaven is the progress of human intelligence indebted. But for the teachings and influence of the Bible who can say that we would not now be groping in the same degrading darkness from which the doctrines of the cross had delivered these Colossians?

There are two great empires in the world. The head of the one is Satan—a dark and malignant spirit who invaded and overran the earth at the beginning, who still holds sway over the kingdoms of this world, and who rules in the children of disobedience. Into this empire we are all born, as we are all natively the children of wrath. But God in His mercy has sent His only-begotten Son into the world to assail this gigantic usurpation, to set up another standard, and to organize around it a kingdom of righteousness and salvation. This is "the kingdom of heaven" as over against the kingdom of hell. It is the reign of God in men's hearts, sustained and perpetuated by an economy of means and administrations of which Christ is the centre and the Holy Ghost is the operating power. It is carried on and propagated by means of the Word and sacraments. Wherever God's ambassadors go preaching the Word this heavenly kingdom presents itself, and wherever people listen to that Word, believe it, and submit themselves to what it directs and commands, they become subjects of this kingdom, and pass from the dominion of Satan into free citizenship in

the heavenly commonwealth. And this transfer these Colossians had experienced. As the apostle expresses it, they were "translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son."

Through faith in the proclamations of the Gospel they had forgiveness of sins through Christ's blood. Instead of condemnation, they had now attained to justification—not by their works or goodness, but through the bitter sufferings and death of Him who was delivered for our offences and raised again for our justification. Corrupt and sinful as they once were, they now had full absolution, and all their ill-deservings were no longer counted to them, as Christ, whom they had now accepted as their Saviour, had borne their sins in His own body on the tree.

Many Christian affections had likewise been born into their souls. Having come to "faith in Christ Jesus" and to hope of eternal life through Him, there came with it a deep fellow-feeling for all saints, of some of the happy fruits of which Paul himself was a grateful recipient. The moment true Christian life begins to pulsate in the heart it begets a tenderness toward all men, and especially toward those who are of the household of faith. Beginning to breathe the free air of Christian liberty, there starts up a feeling of sympathetic affinity with all who have obtained like precious faith, which is specially vigorous and active in behalf of those who suffer for the Gospel's sake. And so it was with these Colossians. They thought of the aged apostle in his long imprisonment, and sent him substantial testimonials of their

sympathy and love. This was so comforting to him that he ceased not to thank God for it, and wrote this special Epistle in return, assuring them of his grateful appreciation and his constant prayers for their prosperity in all spiritual good.

Here, then, was a very hopeful beginning. But it was only a beginning. Much yet remained to be added. The faith, knowledge, and devotion of these people still needed to grow. And hence we have here also,

II. An Earnestly-desired Progress.

As the apostle informed the Colossians of his prayers for them, he at the same time told them what it was that he so earnestly desired in them. It was that they might continue and increase in their spiritual graces and attainments. And from the particulars which he names we may gather what was his idea of progress and growth in grace.

A knowledge of the truth as it is in Jesus they had. But there are such heights and depths and lengths and breadths in Christian knowledge that it cannot all be taken in at once. The greatest of saints never get done learning it. All Christians need continually to add to their knowledge, and to strive after deeper and clearer insight into the mysteries of God and His grace. Even the most knowing are like children on the seashore. Though they may gather many precious pebbles and beautiful shells, the vast ocean of truth still lies all unexplored before them.

I once met a person who urged that some people know too much, and that their very wisdom in sacred things spoils their piety. This may be where the heart is not permeated with the love of God; but it will be a sad day for Christianity if ever its professors come to accept the maxim that "ignorance is the mother of devotion." It is through the truth that we are to be sanctified, and the truth is to make us free; but how can the truth fulfil these offices if we never half know or understand it? Everywhere we are exhorted to buy the truth, to seek after wisdom, and to pursue it. It is laid down as one of the primary principles of Christian life to be ever "increasing in the knowledge of God." So far from deprecating much intelligence and familiarity with holy things, the apostle here says it was his chief prayer for these Colossians that they "*might be filled with the knowledge of God's will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding*." Nay, he presents it as the foremost and most fundamental of all Christian graces and attainments. Elsewhere he rebukes certain Christians for the little progress they had made in this particular, mentioning it to their shame that when for the time they should be teachers they had need that one should teach them again which be the first principles of the oracles of God (Heb. 5 : 12). Peter also lays it down as one of the essential accompaniments of growth in grace to "grow in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ" (2 Pet. 3 : 18).

A man once said to me that it was useless for him to go to church, for he knew it all. Mistaken man!

I saw him on his deathbed, and found his soul so destitute of evangelic light that he had not enough of Christian knowledge to enable him to die in peace.

Dear friends, let us not be deceived; we need the fullest Christian knowledge we can possibly get. Even the most familiar parts of it we need to have continually reiterated in our ears, or our piety will wilt and die, leaving us barren in life and only wretched in death. Never can we come to the strength and stature of men and women in Christ except as we search and study the Scriptures, listen attentively to the exposition of the Word, and continually grow in spiritual knowledge and intelligence; for this is a vital part of all growth in grace.

So, again, while these people had hopefully come to Christian faith and profession, and were acting very generously in it, a lifelong devotion yet remained to be maintained. As beginners they were all right, but to fill out consistent Christian lives they would need much strengthening of faith, watchfulness, prayer, assiduity, earnestness, perseverance, and oft renewals of moral resolve. Because a man is a hopeful believer it does not follow that he will hold out faithfully to the end, or that his walk will always accord with his profession. Some Christians are like mill-wheels, which move indeed, but always stand in the same place; or like mill-horses, which go round and round, but never get beyond the one narrow circle. And though a man may have found grace to put him on the way

of life, he will need a great increase of grace to keep him on it. Justifying grace must be supplemented with sanctifying and persevering grace. The apostle well understood this, and hence implored for this people "*that they might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work.*"

Christianity is not only a spiritual but a very practical religion. All its discoveries, light, and knowledge are intended to fashion the life to the well-pleasing of God. Men may decry the preaching of the necessity of works as they please, but the conduct of Christians must be of a piece with the Gospel, and accord with Him in whom our trust is. Many willingly confess Christ and claim to hold with Him as their Saviour, but walk inconsistently, and are only a discredit to the Christian name. Many are devoted in some things, but excuse themselves in others, and are not "fruitful in *every* good work." Some are great saints on great occasions or when there is chance to shine in the esteem of men, but are very deficient in private spheres and duties, and strangely leaden and dull where no applause is forthcoming. Some are great Christians in *talk*, but very indifferent ones when it comes to *work*. Some can always be depended on where it costs them nothing; but when burdens are to be borne their interest lies somewhere else. Some are generous enough with their means, but expect their dollars to answer in place of a pure life and to counterbalance a vast deal of self-indulgence and unsanctity. Some are full of zeal and energy, provided they are allowed to do everything their own

way, and are not compelled to co-operate with certain other people whom they despise and hate. And so the Church has ever to do with multitudes of chaotic, one-sided, undeveloped, unsatisfactory Christians, whose walk is anything but of a piece with their profession; showing how important this part of the apostle's prayer was, and what grace, culture, and spiritual growth still need to be added to a hopeful beginning in order to make everything as it ought to be.

Christian life also lies through many temptations, trials and afflictions, demanding an ever-renewed stock of grace, patience, and perseverance. The world around these Colossians was heathen. Idolatry was enthroned in every part of the society in which they lived. Jewish bigotry and enmity to Christ made common cause with it in despising, persecuting, and maligning all followers of this new faith. Paul was then a prisoner at Rome on account of his preaching of Christ, and he well knew that like troubles would befall these people also. Persecutions from without and temptations and distractions from within were sure to come. It could not be otherwise than that they would be hated, assailed, and put into many dangerous and afflictive straits, in which they would surely make shipwreck if not rooted and grounded in love, strong and clear in faith, and patient, firm, courageous, and inflexible in moral resolve. Hence the apostle further prayed that they might be "*strengthened with all might according to the glorious power of God, unto all patience and long-suffering with joyfulness.*

We know full well how readily even good and worthy Christians often flag and despond and abandon their places when things go ill with them. We are weak and easily disheartened. There is so much to be endured on all sides that spiritual composure is apt to give way to fretfulness, complaining, and even unbelief. There is so much faithlessness and treachery; so much falsity and uncharity; such lack of appreciation, sympathy, and co-operation with what should command every good man's interest; such malicious misconstruing of motives, perversions of truth, betrayals of confidence, slanders, lies, and devilish envies, jealousies, misrepresentations, and stabs in the dark; such heartlessness, hypocrisies, ingratitude, selfishness, and ready taking up with the malignities of bad men whose egoism and vainglorious conceit have been thwarted,—that human nature is prone to become disgusted, to let go all confidence, and to drop off into sullen scoffing at religion and its professors. Nor can any of us possess our souls in patience and go joyfully on amid the ever-recurring vexations, trials, and sufferings to be encountered in this world, except as we are strengthened by the glorious power of God, and learn to drink deep into the Spirit of faith, endurance, devotion, and perseverance.

But the heavenly help we need is within our reach if we but seek it. The inspired apostle would not have prayed so unceasingly for what God is not ready and willing to bestow. Nor is the promise any less for us than it was for them. God's ear is not heavy that He cannot hear, nor His arm short-

ened that He cannot save. The celestial arsenal, full of all needed supplies, is open to us, and thither we may come, and get and appropriate for every want and every emergency. Only we must stir up our faith into its full vigor for the purpose. God will help us through if we will manfully help ourselves; but we must show ourselves men and not fretting babes. We must learn to confide in Jehovah's strength and courageously trust in His good providence and promises. Like the Roman soldier of Pompeii who stood to his place with drawn sword against the avalanche of fire that engulfed the city, so we are to stand to our profession and to God's unfailing Word till He shall say it is enough.

We mistake if we suppose that growth and the securement of great strength always mean comfort. People wish and pray to be strong and robust Christians, but seem to expect it to come as by miracle or in one easy flow of pleasant progress. They know it is not so in other things, and yet they fancy it should be so in spiritual things. God's way of imparting His glorious power is not after that sort. He lays burdens on the weak and flabby, and says, "Now stand up under them, and you will be strong;" or sends severe provocations on the peevish and fretful, and says, "Now be patient, and you will master your unruly spirit;" or brings doubting souls into a network of perplexities and perils, and says, "Now try your resources and work yourselves out, and you will be firmer in your faith and more trustful in your God." This does not suit our tastes, and many become rebellious under it; but it is God's

way to strengthen us with all might according to His glorious power. If the metal dreads the furnace, the forge, the rasp, the file, it should never wish to become a bright, polished, and well-tempered blade to be worn in triumph on the hero's side; and if we would reach the full vigor of men and women in Christ, we must be willing to go through winter's storms, trials, and hardships as well as through summer sunshine and flowery paths.

It is also one of the laws of growth and improvement to be constant in our efforts to become. The sprout of the acorn can only become a tree by continual stretching out or pushing upward and struggling incessantly through all its fibres to reach mature height and dimensions. A child can never become a man without perpetual looking, wish, and effort in the line of things which make a man. Nor can we ever become strong and mature saints without earnest desire, prayer, resolved purpose, and unfaltering patience to that end.

This, then, is what Paul wished and prayed that these Colossian Christians might have. To be filled with the knowledge of God's will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; to walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work; to be strengthened with all might according to His glorious power unto all patience and long-suffering with joyfulness,—this is the filling out of a good and true Christian character and life, befitting our calling, mission, and privileges in this world, and making us meet for transfer to a better whensoever our blessed Lord sees best.

We come, then, to glance at the crown of such a life—

III. The Blessed Consummation.

There is another, wider, higher, a far more exalted scene of things than that with which we are here conversant. Christianity enlarges our prospects into the depths of eternity. It brings life and immortality to light, and points onward to a world to come, a better country, a world of beauty, dignity, purity, and honor, not put into subjection to the angels, but in reserve for the people of God.

Paul here speaks of an "*inheritance*"—κλῆρος, *an apportioned lot*—not a thing earned by our works and sufferings, but a thing of heirship allotted to us as our portion by virtue of our connection with Him who has won it for us. As the children of Adam we inherit sin, condemnation, and death. But there has come a second Adam, even the Lord from heaven, and by faith in Him we receive power to become the sons of God, and so heirs of God and joint-heirs with Jesus Christ. We are minors now, under tutors and governors, differing not from servants; but, though minors, we are *heirs*, as mere servants are not. Christ has won for us a grand estate which is the patrimony of faith. It is not the pay of servants, but the inheritance of children.

What all that inheritance is we cannot fully tell. It doth not yet appear what we shall be. But everything said of it gives the idea of something very exalted, substantial, and glorious. It may be on the earth, for Jesus says the meek shall inherit the earth (Matt. 5 : 5). But it will not be in this present

world, for it is "the world to come," when this present world has passed away (Heb. 2 : 5). Peter tells of a coming day of the Lord when all that now exists upon and around this globe shall undergo a baptism of fire, corresponding to that of water which befell the antediluvian world; but immediately adds, "Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness" (2 Pet. 3 : 10–13). John, in his visions of the promised consummation, says, "I saw heaven new, and earth new: for the first heaven and the first earth are gone" (Rev. 21 : 1). But we need not speculate as to what all this may mean. Whatever and wherever "the inheritance of the saints" may be, it is a very transcendent portion.

Paul here calls it "the inheritance of the saints." Then none but the true children of God can ever have part in it. If it is "the inheritance of *the saints*," then none but saints can ever be partakers of it. Whatever may become of people who are not saints, they cannot have this inheritance. Nor is it for saints as they now are, but for "the saints *in light*"—the saints revealed, manifested, shown as saints. Saints are in light now and walk in light. They are of all men the illuminated. But their life is hid with Christ in God. They are yet to "appear" as they do not now appear; and when they "appear" it will be in the complete likeness of Christ and with Christ, in His glory. Hence this inheritance is the inheritance of the saints resurrected, glorified, and in the immortal state. Peter describes it as "incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not

away, reserved in heaven." Behold, what sublimities thus come into view!

Incorruptible! In this world everything is tending to decay. Nothing lives, but it must die. "Earth to earth, ashes to ashes, and dust to dust," is the fate of all that pertains to this present world. Kingdoms, empires, cities, monuments, the proudest things ever erected by man, crumble down and cease to be. The temple, the ark, the golden cherubim, the rod that budded, the very stones on which Jehovah engraved His law, have disappeared. The patriarchs came to their tombs. The prophets and apostles, where are they? The saints of other days, who adorned the world with their sanctity and wisdom, all have gone. Our choicest treasures and best possessions tarnish, waste, decay, and presently are no more. We ourselves are daily tending to the grave, where perhaps a few disintegrating stones and fading flowers will tell the story of death and corruption to which our bodies have fallen victims. But it is not so with the inheritance of the saints in light. That is incorruptible. No decay or death is found within its blessed domain.

Undefiled! What is there on earth unmarred by imperfections or untainted with impurities? The most beautiful flowers have their poisons; the most attractive fortunes their histories of meanness and of wrong; the loftiest titles their records of oppression; the noblest thrones are inlaid with bones of murdered men, injustice, and tyranny. There is not a scene of loveliness but the trail and slime of the old serpent is over it. But it is not so with

the inheritance of the saints in light. Treasures are there, but no dirty shilling has place among them. Thrones, dominions, crowns, and principalities are there, but all as pure and rightful as Jehovah's authority. Grand assemblies of the sons of God are there, but no Satan comes among them to accuse or afflict the princely Jobs, who then no longer sit in ashes or scrape themselves with pot-sherds or mourn the offensiveness of their corruptions or bewail the mistaken judgments of their would-be comforters.

Fadeth not away! What does not fade on earth? "Whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away." All the things that are seen are temporal. The very heavens that span over us shall wax old as doth a garment, and as we cast off our worn-out clothes, so they shall be folded up and laid aside. It is not so with the coming inheritance of the saints. God's own immortality is stamped upon all that pertains to it. Everything there is amaranthine. Nothing fades, nothing wastes, nothing ever dies. No rusting swords hang on its trophied walls, no tattered banners dropping away in shreds, no battered shields corroding to nothingness. No summer blight or autumn sere falls on its immortal fruits and flowers. To its loveliness and glory there shall be no diminution and no end.

Reserved in heaven! It was prepared from the foundation of the world (Matt. 25 : 34). Since then it has been laid up with the treasures of God, kept

under His own eye, sheltered by His omnipotence, and faithfully reserved from all invasion of enemies or decay. It is *reserved in the heavens!* Not that it will necessarily be located in the heavens when the heirs come to possess it, for the New Jerusalem cometh down from God out of the heavens, so that the tabernacle of God is with men (Rev. 21). The meaning is that it is now safely preserved and guarded in the heavens—that it is in the keeping of the heavens, securely held in the highest realms as the most precious thing in Jehovah's guardianship, and cherished by Him as the eternally-purposed possession of His dear children. Other inheritances are liable to be scattered, depreciated, run down before the heirs get possession of them. A thousand dangers are liable to come in and destroy them or take from their worth. But the inheritance of the saints is secure—safe beyond all depreciation or damage. It is reserved and kept among the highest and holiest parts of God's creations, inaccessible to accidents or foot of foe or hand of marauder or inroad of rust or moth or thief. And it is kept *for us*, who also are kept by the same power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

Dear friends, what more can we ask or think or desire than is thus promised to those who hold the beginning of their confidence steadfast unto the end? How blessed our calling! how transporting our hope! Believing in Jesus, there has come also the Holy Spirit of promise to seal our glorious heirship; which Spirit we now have as "the earnest of our

inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession." What glàdder things could we have to animate our souls and sweeten our lives, even though for the present time we are in heaviness through manifold trials and temptations? Precious Gospel of the blessed God! Let us bind it ever to our hearts, "giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light."

Twenty-fifth Sunday after Trinity.

1 Thess. 4 : 13–18 : But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope.

For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him.

For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep.

For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God : and the dead in Christ shall rise first : then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air : and so shall we ever be with the Lord.

Wherefore, comfort one another with these words.

THERE is no place where unaided human reason is so much at a loss as in the presence of death and among the sepulchres of the departed. While yet unvisited by the light of revelation that whole realm to man is one starless night—a land of darkness, horror, and despair. Hence the superabounding manifestations of grief and woe which have ever marked the funeral rites of the heathen world, and hence also the dismal gloom which meets us everywhere in pagan literature, quenching the gayety even of their lyric poets and brooding in monumental sorrow over the unblest graves of their dead. Judaism itself was

never quite redeemed from this natural horror of death and this cheerless desolation of bereaved affection. Though not without some dim notification of what is to come after death, it still held its ear down to the earth, listening in great uncertainty for an answer to the question, "If a man die, shall he live again?" Death was still too deep, too mighty, too absolute, for their faith to master. It was reserved for the Gospel to throw the first clear light into the sepulchre and to show to man something assuring with regard to the mysterious Beyond. And though there still lingers among its professors quite too much of the old pagan feeling, it is not because there is any just ground for it. Had we no other utterances on the subject than those which come before us in the text, it would be enough to draw a line of wide and mighty difference between Christians and all others in this regard. Though believers may weep at the ravages of death, there is no reason why they should sorrow as those who have no hope. A light has been kindled for their illumination which, of right, should serve to assuage the bitterness of their grief and to alleviate their sorrows, whether over the graves of their friends or amidst other trials and calamities.

I. *Note the Manner in which Death is here Described.* By the wonderful transformations wrought by Christ it is no longer "death," but has become a mere "*sleep*:" "Them also which *sleep* in Jesus." So reads the New Testament from one end to the other: "She is not dead, but *sleepeth*;" "Our friend Lazarus *sleepeth*;" "David, after he had served his

own generation by the will of God, fell on *sleep*;" Stephen "fell *asleep*;" "We shall not all *sleep*." Hence the old Christians called their burial-grounds *cemeteries*—that is, sleeping-places—where they laid their departed friends to take their quiet rest. The expression is sweetly significant.

Sleep is transitory. It implies a waking again. It is only the prelude to a mightier life. The heathen had used the term with regard to the dead, but never reached the true idea. They spoke of death as a sleep, but as "a long, an endless, an unbroken sleep." They called it an "eternal sleep," which is a contradiction in terms. The Gospel calls death a "sleep," for the reason that the death state is not eternal, but only temporary, from which there is presently to come a rising up again. That is not *sleep* which has no awaking to follow it.

Sleep is a cessation of bodily activities, but not a cessation of existence. A sleeping man still exists in all the essential integrity of his being. He is inanimate, but he as really lives during sleep as at any other time. And death is only a sleep, because those whom men call dead have not lost the continuity of their being, but still live to God. What manner of life theirs is has not been fully revealed, but we are assured that when men kill the body there still remains a soul which they cannot kill. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob had gone to the grave long before Christ came, yet He said that they were then still in some sense alive, and founded on this an argument for the continued validity of God's covenant to them, and hence of their resurrection to

enjoy the promises. There was a bosom of Abraham where the departed Lazarus was comforted, and a paradise in which the penitent thief was to be with Jesus while his body hung dead upon the cross. The state of the dead may be an imperfect state, an abnormal state, a state to be vastly improved by the resurrection of the body, but it is not a cessation of being, not an oblivion. It is only a *sleep.*

Sleep is rest—not the rest of a stone, cold and lifeless, but of a living being quietly reposing from labor and weariness. In this respect also death is a sleep. John says: "I heard a voice from heaven, saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth, Even so, saith the Spirit; for they do *rest from their labors.*" The pains and aches and discomforts of disease, sorrow, vexation, toil, and care are no longer felt by the dead. "They have no more persecution, nor stoning, nor scourging, nor crucifying; no more martyrdoms by fire or the wheel or barbed shafts; no more bitterness of heart nor iron entering into the soul; no more burdens of wrong nor amazement nor perplexity. Never again shall they weep for unkindness and disappointment and withered hopes, and desolation of heart. Their last sickness is over, and all the oppressive tokens of coming dissolution. The warfare against sin, its strength, its subtleties, its snares, is past. Satan can tempt no more. They have wrestled out the strife with the unseen powers of the Wicked One, and won the mastery. There is no more inward struggle, no sliding back again, no swerving aside, no danger of falling. The tortures

of indwelling sin have ceased. They have gained the shore of peace." They rest, for they sleep.

II. *Note what is further said of these Sleeping Ones.* We call them the departed, but they are not gone for ever. They shall come back again. When David bewailed the loss of his child, he said, "I will go to him, but he shall not return to me." But David had not yet come into that fulness of Gospel promises which we enjoy. The holy dead will return again. The apostle would not have us ignorant on this subject, and assures us that, as we believe that Jesus died and rose again, "*even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him.*"

This is a great and mighty saying. Its implications are astounding. God is to come. There is to be a resurrection. A new and glorious reanimation is to reach those fallen and decayed members. Corruption is to give place to what cannot any more corrupt; dishonor, to glory; weakness, to power; the natural, to the spiritual; the earthy, to the heavenly; the likeness to Adam, to likeness to the glorified Jesus. There can be no doubt about it. The apostle gives it on authority which cannot be questioned. He speaks "by the word of the Lord," and he presents the matter as pledged, certified, and made immutably sure by the resurrection of Jesus Christ. The great plain word is, "The Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God, and *the dead in Christ shall rise first.*" Every grave shall be visited, every forgotten tomb found

and every sleeper in Jesus awakened to a new and sublimer life.

It is impossible to tell all that is included in this resurrection. "It doth not yet appear what we shall be." What can the repulsive caterpillar know of the beautiful form of being which awaits it in the butterfly? What can the dull mists of morning know of the rainbow glories in which the evening shall array them? Of this, however, we are assured—that Jesus shall "change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body, according to the working whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself." And by the might of that great working departed saints shall return again—return, not as invisible spirits or disembodied ghosts, but as corporeal and living beings, tangible, real, complete, immortal. With the opening of the heavens for the return of Jesus the graves of His saints will open, their sleeping dust take life again, and they shall come back in all the elements of restored bodily life.

Nor will they suffer disadvantage for having been so long absent. The Thessalonians feared they would. These saints were full of "the blessed hope" of the speedy return of the absent Saviour. They looked for no millennium in this world, but they anticipated glorious things from the speedy revelation of Jesus Christ and their gathering together unto Him. But how would it be with their loved ones in the grave? Would they not miss all this now? Here was the disturbing thought which made them grieve the more for their dead. They

did not yet rightly know the Scriptures nor the power of God. They had not yet taken in that resurrection meant return, and that resurrection was to precede the joys on which their eyes and hopes were set. And to this point the apostle speaks. No advantage, says he, shall the living have over the dead when that promised day of glory comes. The word of the Lord is witness "that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent [precede, have any advantage over] them which are asleep." True, "we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump;" but it shall not be in advance of "them which are asleep," for "the dead in Christ shall rise *first*," before any living one is "changed." Not a ray of the glory shall the living see, and not a joy of the occasion shall the living taste, till the saints that sleep have all been recovered from their graves. How long may be the interval between the rising of them that sleep and the changing of them that live has not been told us, but there is an interval. "The dead in Christ shall rise *first*," and "we which are alive and remain" shall be "changed" afterward. And when the anticipated glory comes the departed saints shall be in no manner disadvantaged by their having died. When the Saviour comes, they will be here. God shall bring them with Him.

III. *Note the Relation that is to Subsist between these Awakened Sleepers and those still Living.* When some of the saints that slept arose at Christ's resurrection, they were seen of many in Jerusalem.

Christ also showed Himself to His friends for the space of forty days after His resurrection before He ascended into heaven. It may be so again in the case of the saints whom God shall recall to life in advance of the rapture of the living.

Christianity is social as well as personal. The idea of society, companionship, and intercommunion enters into all its hopes as into all its duties. We are by nature social beings. Our existence requires society. We are all members one of another. We were reared in families. We got our being thus, and hence have social ties. And it is the same in Christianity. We owe our faith and hopes to one another, just as our natural life. We worship together. Faith is begotten from one in another, and by it we are joined in a common fellowship to a common Saviour, with all our relationships sanctified and ennobled by our common piety. All natural affections are purified and strengthened in Christ, and new ones are superadded by reason of our union with Jesus. And, though great changes may be wrought with reference to many of these bonds as now existing, they are too beautiful and sacred ever to be entirely lost. In some form or other many of them will be eternal, as love is eternal. They are somehow to go with us into heaven itself, and to contribute their share in making heaven what it is. And so we may count on some manifestations founded on them in connection with the return to this world of them that sleep in Jesus. The resurrected dead will most likely show themselves to and converse with them that are yet

alive before they are taken to the place prepared for them.

But neither the resurrected saints nor the living saints will then continue long in this world. They will all be taken away from it. They are to mount up as upon eagles' wings. They are to "be caught up in the clouds." They are "to meet the Lord in the air." As the blessed Saviour ascended up from Mount Olivet, so they are to ascend up out of the sight of those who are "left," that they may be "ever with the Lord."

And when that mysterious translation comes, it will not be solitary, like that of Enoch and of Elijah, but *in company*. The resurrected saints and the then living saints "shall be caught up *together*."

These Thessalonians had lost many social treasures over which they were mourning. Beloved members of their church had fallen, and valued Christian leaders, fathers, mothers, sons, daughters, brothers, sisters, husbands, wives, precious babes and loving friends. Death had taken them. They knew that these had not perished, that their flesh still rested in hope; but they were distressed at the separations that had occurred, and all the more as they thought these departed ones were now deprived of participation in the blessed scenes for which they waited Hence this discourse of the apostle on the companionship between the living and the dead when the promise comes to be fulfilled. That word "*together*" had a world of significance in it. It told of decimated circles filled up, with each fallen link

again in its place. As Israel went up, tribe by tribe and family by family and friend with friend, to the holy feasts of Jerusalem, so shall it be with these ransomed ones, the dead with the living. As the year of jubilee returned every Hebrew to his family, so shall the resurrection morning reconstruct each believing home, reunite its long-severed members, and bring together again the congenial and loving friends of other days. They shall be "caught up *together*," and no separations shall ever intervene again.

And with this there comes a thought which is not without its worth. If we are so fortunate as to be numbered with the saved, our entry into heaven will not be like a sudden appearance in the midst of an assembly where we know nobody. We will have our own friends and company with us. Being caught up *together*, we shall come in *together* and be with the Lord *together*. It will be a new home for us, and the scenes and experiences will be such as we cannot now conceive or picture; but we will not appear there as bewildered strangers among strangers, whose names, faces, and characters we have then for the first time to learn. Our own dear friends, whom we have known the longest and loved the best, shall be by our side. The child shall have its mother's hand; the timid youth have its trusted one to look up to and by whose voice and smiles to be encouraged and assured; and every one associates in whose well-known sympathy and love there is the freest and fullest confidence. Though the one be long dead and the other still in the battle of life, they

will then join each other again. They will be in sweet companionship *together*, each with unfolded sameness of personal identity, only replenished with a holier interest and filled with a sublimer light.

IV. *Note wherein it is that the Apostle Locates the Chief Happiness of the Saints in the Final Kingdom.* Under many forms and images do the Scriptures set forth the final glory of the redeemed. Varied also are the honors that remain to be revealed. All the saints are to be kings and priests. They are to have power and dominion. They are to judge the world and to judge angels. They are to be crowned with gold and reign for ever and ever. All this is declared, and sets before us a destiny of honor and glory which oppresses by its very splendor. But none of these are mentioned in the text. The social is here the chief idea. There is a fellowship of saints with saints, but there is still another fellowship more precious than all and more attractive to a heart of love than crowns, kingships, or imperishable dominion. The soul redeemed by Jesus' blood and ransomed by His glorious power would rather be with *Him*, to see Him as He is, to bless Him for His goodness, and to enjoy His presence and fellowship, than rule worlds or govern angels. And this is the special joy that is here set forth for the consolation of the saints. Recovered from sin and death, changed, caught up to meet the Lord in the air, "*so shall we ever be with the Lord.*"

Oh, sweet home-echo on the pilgrim's way,
Thrice welcome message from a land of light!

As through a clouded sky the moonbeams stray,
So, on eternity's deep-shrouded night
Streams a mild radiance from the cheering word,
"So shall we be for ever with the Lord."

Here kindred hearts are severed far and wide
By many a weary mile of land and sea;
Our life's all-varied cares and paths divide;
But yet a joyful gathering there shall be—
The broken links repaired, the lost restored,
For so we shall be ever "with the Lord."

V. *Note what Use the Apostle would have us Make of these Presentations.* They were meant to be of service. The admonition is, "*Comfort one another with these words.*" And surely there is comfort in them. They were a fitting emollient for the hearts of these sorrowing Thessalonians, and they are full of consolation for all Christians.

They should serve to comfort us against all undue sorrow for our dead. When the mother sees her little ones all quietly asleep, she finds therein no cause for tears and lamentations. Having long watched by the bedside of a tortured sufferer till at last we behold him resting in peaceful slumber, we do not deplore and sorrow over it as a calamity. Why, then, give way to inconsolable grief when our loved ones sleep in Jesus? Are they not as safe in His arms as in ours? Do they not sleep as softly in their coffins as in their beds? Nay, from their resting in this world they wake only to weary again, but when they lay them down in death there is nothing beyond but blessedness. From earthly sleep they awake to die, but from the sleep of the grave

they awake to live for ever. Whatever be our state or place here, before us is the deathbed, the coffin, and the tomb; but for "them that sleep in Jesus" the awful change is over. "Blessed and happy dead! In them the work of the new creation is wellnigh accomplished. What feebly stirs in us, in them is wellnigh full. They have passed within the veil, and there remaineth only one more change for them—a change full of foreseen, foretasted bliss. How calm, how pure, how sainted are they now! A few short years ago and they were almost as weak and poor as we, burdened with the dying body we now bear about, harassed by temptations, often overcome, weeping in bitterness of soul, and struggling with fearful hearts toward the dark shadow from which they shrank as we shrink now." But the battle is over, and they are for ever at rest. Wherefore, then, should we weep for them, or sorrow as those who have no hope?

The same should serve to comfort us with regard to our own death. It is a strange and awful thing to die. Do what we may, there is, after all, a something about it alien from a living spirit, confusing, perturbing, and full of dark and chilling shadows. We cannot but wish that it were over or that we could somehow be exempted from it. As we see and feel it coming we cannot but say, "How am I straitened till it be accomplished!" But we need not be dismayed at it. It is but a sleep. No harm can come to the believer from it. Our great Shepherd will not conduct us to the mouth of the dark valley and then forsake us. He has covenanted to go with us

through all the dreadful shade, to comfort and assure us at every step and turn, and to bring us forth in safety to the blessed land beyond. We can trust Him to keep us when we sink unconscious on our earthly pillows, and why not when we come to lay us down into His own sweet and almighty arms? He has engaged to call us when the morning comes, and meanwhile to watch and guard our slumbering dust till He shall bid it rise—rise in the image of His own blessed immortality.

Wherefore, then, should we be afraid of death? Rather is it life that we should fear. Death cannot damage us, but life can. Dying in faith, we are for ever secure beyond all peradventure; but living, we know not what slips and falls and swervings and perils of our salvation we may have to endure. Sleeping in Jesus, we have securely crossed the ugly river and reached the blessed shore; but staying amid the hazards of this mortal life, we still have the awful passage to make, and know not upon what rocks or shoals we may be wrecked. Who can promise himself the gift of certain perseverance? Who can otherwise than fear for his own heart's treachery or the perils of an unclosed probation? And as often as we come to the mouth of the gaping grave, with what solemn earnestness do we need to repeat the awful words, "O holy and most merciful Saviour, suffer us not at our last hour for any pains of death to fall from Thee"! Yea, verily it is life that we have cause to fear, rather than death; for therein lies our only danger, while death is only the harmless sleep before the morrow of everlasting

blessedness. "Wherefore, comfort one another with these words."

And for all the duties, trials, and sorrows of this present life there is comfort here. What if our lot is hard, our way full of thorns, our earthly comforts but little? What if we are misunderstood, our best motives questioned, our most honest endeavors misinterpreted to our disadvantage? What if friends are weak and faithless? What if we are stung and hurt and disappointed where we meant only good? What if our lives are made bitter unto us, and pain and hardship cleave to us all our journey through? It is only for a little while. The body of this death we shall soon lay down. The grave will rest it, and the resurrection will purge out and brush off all its vileness and infirmities. We shall soon be beyond all this turmoil and this vale of tears. These ashen garments and these heartaches shall presently be laid aside for ever. The friends who have gone from us and left us in such sad loneliness will return again. God will bring them with Him, all the more worthy of our love and the more pure and tender in their affections. In the clouds there is a pavilion for our reception, and we shall soon enter it together. Our dear Saviour is there in all His beauty and loveliness, and there He proposes that we shall remain to bless and enjoy Him perpetually. Wherefore, then, should we be disheartened or disconsolate at what may happen to us in this world?

Be comforted, then, dear Christian believer, and be sure that He who redeemed thee with His blood will never leave nor forsake thee. He who pro-

vided for thy loving reception into this world will not leave thee unprovided for in making thy advent into the next. Trusting Him for the forgiveness of thy sins, trust Him also for the fulfilment of His precious Word to keep thee through all the mysteries of death, till thou shalt find thyself "ever with the Lord."

Twenty-sixth Sunday after Trinity.

2 Pet. 3 : 3–10 : Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation.

For this they willingly are ignorant of, that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water: whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished: but the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men.

But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.

The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is long-suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.

But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up.

CCORDING to the apostle Peter, the exaltation of the crucified Jesus to be "both Lord and Christ," inclusive of His "power and coming," is the central substance of the faith on which the Church is built. Any weakening, doubtfulness, or gainsaying with regard to this was to him aberration from the truth of God, belonging to the category of "damnable heresies."

All his efforts by word and letter were directed to the establishment of his brethren in these fundamental and ever-present truths, whether for comfort against trials and suffering or for the keeping of the soul alive in all Christian duty, fidelity, and hope. He likewise claims that herein is the sum of all that the prophets spoke, the Lord commanded, and the apostles taught. In the passage before us he specially emphasizes the same, and seeks to have it carefully guarded and indelibly impressed on his readers, so as to be a living power in the soul to keep it steadfast in the Gospel of our Lord. Three things are specially brought to our attention:

I. A Great Outstanding Promise;
II. An Attendant Ending of this World;
III. An Ill Skepticism on the Subject.

May God help us to contemplate them to our profit in all godliness of life!

I. A Great Outstanding Promise.

The apostle had just been treating of the certitude of the Christian faith. He had referred to the testimony of his own eyes and ears, the miraculous attestations "from the excellent glory," and the "sure Word of prophecy" as the invincible foundation for what he taught and wished his readers above all to hold fast—namely, "*the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ*," to which he here refers again as "*the promise of His coming*." We can therefore be at no loss to determine what particular promise is here in mind. It is the same which is everywhere

presented as the one all-comprehending hope of the Church, even the coming again of the Lord Jesus Christ in power and great glory to consummate His great redemptive purposes. (See John 14 : 2, 3; Matt. 24 : 30; Acts 1 : 11; 2 Thess. 1 : 7–10; Rev. 1 : 7; 22 : 20.)

On this point there is much faulty teaching and great lack of clear understanding. Some treat of it as if it referred to Christ's providential removal of us from this world by death. Manifestly, this is an error. Death may be the end of the world to us, but it is not the coming of Christ to the world. There is no point in which death or our removal by death fulfils the descriptions of the promised coming again of Christ. Death is part of the curse, nowhere given as a subject of evangelic promise. It is a sad necessity, a humiliating memorial and consequence of sin, but not a thing of "blessed hope." The joyful anticipations of Christianity all centre in the resurrection, not in death—in the raising of men from the grave, not the putting of them in it. And to read death into the promise of the coming again of the Lord Jesus is to turn all the elements of our faith upside down.

Others construe the promise as if it meant Christ's spiritual coming in the regenerating and converting power of the Gospel, in an increasing success of Christian principles, and an ultimate recovery of the depraved world to righteousness, simply through existing instrumentalities. But this again greatly empties the scriptural presentations, and has not a single divine promise on which to rest. Christ's

coming is to "*judge the world*," and judgment never comes to a converted world, but to a world in incorrigible rebellion. Nay, the apostle John condemns it as an anti-Christian heresy for men to deny that Jesus Christ is ἐρχόμενον ἐν σαρκί—*the coming One, come and to come in the flesh* (2 John 7).

But some who accept the literal and personal coming again of Jesus still have a very confused and dim understanding of it. Many disable their comprehension of it by thinking of it as a single event, limited to a particular moment, day, or hour. Thus viewed, it cannot be half understood. The things involved are unconstruable in that way. The ancient predictions of the first coming were not fulfilled except at various and widely-separated times in the Saviour's history. They were, indeed, all fulfilled to the minutest letter, but not in one and the same day or year. For example, Micah said He should "come" out of Bethlehem-Ephratah; Hosea said He should come out of Egypt; other prophets said He should come out of Nazareth, appear as a great light in the land of Zebulon and Naphtali, "suddenly come to His temple," and come to Zion "riding upon an ass." All these predictions were true and found fulfilment in the course of our Saviour's earthly career, but they were not true of any one individual day or year of His life. He *did come* at Bethlehem; He did come out of Egypt; He was a Nazarene; He did come as a great light in Northern Galilee; He did suddenly come to His temple; He did come to Jerusalem riding upon an ass's colt; but He did *not* come in all these circum-

stantialities in one and the same point of time. These were so many different presentations at different dates and places, covering a period of more than thirty-three years. Each of them is called His *coming*, so that many separate times and items were embraced and included in what we call the first Advent.

And as it was in the first, so it will be in the second. It is not at all one individual event or scene confined to one place or time, but distributes itself in a variety of successive presentations, acts, and manifestations extending through a period of years, perhaps forty, seventy, one hundred, or even more. The moment we try to weave in every item as belonging to one and the same scene, occasion, or time, we get into irreconcilable contradictions, and everything recedes into mist and confusion, and the Church hardly knows what to make of it.

In the nature of things Christ cannot come "as a thief in the night" and at the same time be openly manifested to all eyes. He cannot come *for* His saints when He gathers them from their graves, beds, avocations, and fields at the same time that He comes "*with* His saints" to execute judgment upon the wicked world. He cannot come before the great tribulation to "take" His faithful watchers, and thus keep them out of it, at the same time that He comes at the end of that trouble to terminate it by the destruction of Antichrist, under whose domination the great tribulation occurs. He cannot come riding forth as an armed warrior on a white horse for the battle of the great day of God Almighty at the

same moment that He appears seated upon the throne of His glory.

The Scriptures also draw a clear distinction between the presence of Christ at the second coming and the manifestation of that presence to the world. There is a *παρουσία* (*presence*) and an *ἐπιφανεια της παρουσίας* (an *appearing of the presence*), implying that some parts or occurrences of the promised coming will be invisible and unobserved to men in general, while other parts will be openly manifest; and hence the two must necessarily be separated in point of time.

But while what is included in the second coming is not limited to any one single scene, act, event, day, or hour, every particular in the prophetic accounts must come out as literally and fully in the future Advent as in the one past. A sacred chart of the whole matter in detail is given us in the last book of the New Testament, which, according to its own account of itself, is the particular foreshowing of the apocalypse of our Lord in all the successive and interlacing particulars of its momentous accomplishment. First of all, the sleeping saints are to be raised from the dead and the living saints translated, and both classes together "caught up" to meet the Lord in the air, according to 1 Thess. 4 : 14–17. It is for this that we are now to keep ourselves in continual expectation and readiness. This ereption of the saints from the earth is the taking away of what now hinders the full development and revelation of the Man of Sin, and begins the great judgment period. Then come the various scenes, events and

administrations connected with the breaking of the seven seals, the sounding of the seven trumpets, the pouring out of the seven bowls of wrath, the mighty forthcoming of the King of kings for the destruction of the Antichristian powers, the binding of Satan, and the enthronement of the saints with Himself in immortal dominion over a redeemed world. And all these scenes and occurrences, taken together with the personal presence and doings of our Almighty Lord and Saviour in them, constitute what is promised and summed up in His coming a second time without sin unto salvation.

And a very great thing it is which is thus held out to the Church's hopes. It is the very pole-star by which she directs her way through the dark night of time. The Cross itself fails of its purpose without this crown of the redemptive process, and Christianity is a mere foundation without a superstructure apart from this coming again of the Lord Jesus for the "restitution of all things" which His almighty goodness is then to work. With all our high possessions as Christians, everything in this world is still very ailing, unsatisfactory, and full of mingled ills and infirmities. Everything is weak through the flesh. Death still reigns. Nature around us groans and travails in the pains of an unwilling bondage. Piety and righteousness require many hard struggles and find but poor rewards. The wicked are ever in the majority, and in spite of everything the devil still has the sway. Nor is there any hope that it will ever be different until our blessed Lord shall take to Himself His great power

and come forth in His majesty to end the dominion of disorder and death, lift His people to immortality, destroy the destroyers of the earth, and set up His own eternal reign of righteousness and peace. Our great and only hope is in His coming again in the glory of the Father. We often sorrow now, but "when His glory shall be revealed we shall be glad with exceeding joy" (1 Pet. 4 : 12, 13). We are beset with many discouragements, but great is the grace that is to be brought to us at the revelation of Jesus Christ (1 Pet. 1 : 13). Our privations, trials, and burdens are many and hard to bear, but when the chief Shepherd shall appear there shall come to us unfading crowns of glory (1 Pet. 5 : 4). This is the promise; this is our blessed hope.

But in connection with this coming again of the Lord Jesus, and as part of what is then to be wrought by Him, the apostle foretells,

II. The Ending of this World.

He speaks of the perishing of the world before the Flood, and tells of a similar termination to come to the world which now is. When the predicted day of the Lord arrives the heavens are to pass away with a noisy rushing, the elements to melt with fervent heat, the earth be overrun with devouring fire, and the works that are therein be burned up. As the flood of water terminated and destroyed the old world, so a flood of fire is to terminate and destroy this present world, which is kept in reserve for this destiny.

We are not to suppose, however, as some have

dreamed, that this means an utter blotting of the earth out of existence. There is a notion, bred from the morbid imagination of the Middle Ages, which poets and orators have grandiloquently described, that the time is coming when everything but spiritual natures shall utterly cease to be, the earth consume and disappear, the whole solar system and all the sidereal worlds collapse, and the entire physical universe vanish into nothingness. How this can be, how it can be harmonized with the promises and revealed purposes of God, wherein it exalts the perfections of the Deity, or why all these magnificent material creations should be thus stricken from existence, no mortal can begin to tell. No reason for it anywhere appears. Such a universal triumph of ruin would prove the universal triumph of sin in spite of the redemptive work of Jesus, and in spite of the almightiness of God, who has expended such infinite wisdom, power, and goodness upon these material worlds. Plentiful enough are the instances in which Christ and the sacred writers speak of "*the end of the world*," but men grievously mistake when they suppose that it means the annihilation of our globe.

At least three distinct words are translated *world* in our English Bibles, though they mean very different things. The word which properly means the *the earth*, the ground, this material orb in which we dwell, is γη, but it is nowhere ever said that the γη shall have an end or cease to be. On the contrary, it is expressly said that "*the earth abideth forever*" (Eccles. 1 : 4), and that the sun and moon and

God's holy seed upon the earth shall endure for ever, as the name of Christ itself (Ps. 72 : 5, 17; 89 : 29, 36, 37). Where it is said that "*the world passeth away*" (1 John 2 : 17), and that "*the world* that then was perished" (2 Pet. 3 : 6), the word is not γῆ, but κόσμος, which does not mean the earth as such or its substance as a planet, but the arrangements, habitations, and order of things upon it—the external ornamentation of it, the manner in which men occupy it, and the ways in which its inhabitants are accommodated in it. And where the Saviour speaks of "the end of the world," "the end of this world" (Matt. 13 : 39, 40, 49; 24 : 3; 28 : 20), the original word is αἰών, which does not at all refer to the material earth, but to *time*, whether on earth or elsewhere. It is used more than one hundred times in the New Testament, and always with reference to a particular age, era, or duration of things. It denotes a certain stage or state marking a particular period, administration, dispensation—a continuity of the same kind, whether present or future. It means simply the course of things in any given instance, whether on earth or in heaven. Of course, dispensations change times end, *æons* terminate. And it would be a sad thing for human hopes if we could not look forward to the passing away of the present mixed, disordered, weak, and unsatisfactory condition of things, in which the best can only see as through a glass darkly, in which death still reigns, and in which Satan is still the god who rules in the vast bulk of earthly doings.

This *dispensation*, therefore, is to close, that there

may come a better. It is temporary, as it is preliminary to something else. It is only an *æon*—a time —to be succeeded by other *æons*. There is an expressed limit to every commission which the Church has to execute in this present world. Not one of them runs farther than the end of this *æon*—not because the earth is then to cease to be, but because another order of things is then to come into effect. Nay, when Jesus speaks of the end or consummation of the present *æon*, so far from arguing the annihilation of our planet and all material creations, the implication is that the earth is to continue as the theatre of the changed administrations. Our text says that the old world "*perished*," but the *earth* did not perish. Noah and his family landed on it after the Flood, and found it just as firm in its place as it ever was. The old configuration of things perished. The κόσμος perished. The great body of the population, their works, habitations, and modes of doing, perished. The *æon* ended. But the earth, as a member of the planetary system, continued to roll on in its accustomed orbit. And so it will be again at the termination of the present æon, which is to last only till Christ comes. Everything upon and around the earth will be changed, and everything relating to it will pass from the present to quite another order and régime; but the earth proper has no end assigned it in any of the divine revelations.

With this also agrees the word used where the *passing away* of the present earth and heavens is spoken of (Matt. 5 : 18, 24, 34, 35; Mark 13 : 30 31; Luke 16 : 17, 21, 33; 2 Pet. 3 : 10; Rev. 21 : 1).

That word is *παρέρχομαι*, which never means annihilation or ceasing to be, but signifies, for the most part, the passing of a person or thing from one place or state to another. It means change, transition, ceasing from one place, condition, or relation by going into another; but there is no clear instance of its use, either in the Scriptures or in classic Greek, in which it means to pass out of existence. It implies great revolution, but it never means utter destruction.

Changes of dispensations always involve desolating disturbances. The death of a man is a great and violent change, ending one age of his being, though not the being itself; and the earth undergoes a somewhat corresponding experience in the transition from one order and form of things to another. The ending of an *æon* is the general breaking up of what has been for the incoming of a new order. When the old world ended in Noah's time, "all the fountains of the great deep were broken up, and the floodgates of heaven were opened, and all flesh died that moved upon the earth, and every living substance was destroyed which was upon the face of the ground, both man and cattle, and the creeping things, and the fowl of the heaven; and Noah only remained alive, and they that were with him in the ark" (Gen. 7 : 11–23). When Jerusalem fell and the Mosaic economy which it represented passed away, there was general devastation and great tribulation, such as was not from the beginning of the world to that time (Matt. 24 : 12). And so when that day of the Lord which is to end the whole

present order of things shall come, all sublunary creation will be made to pass through mighty throes and agonies. The Saviour says, "There shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations with perplexity; the sea and the waves thereof roaring; men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth; for the powers of the heavens shall be shaken" (Luke 21 : 25, 26). Wars, famines, earthquakes, conflagrations, pestilences, and plagues unprecedented are everywhere foretold. Convulsions of nature there will be, overturning the hills, casting mountains into the sea, overwhelming cities and countries, poisoning the fountains, sinking islands, drying up lakes and rivers, turning the waters to blood, sweeping continents with tempests of hail and fire, blasting the forests, desolating the herbage of the earth, perturbing the heavens, filling the sky with smoke, darkness and meteoric showers, making the moon like blood and the sun like sackcloth of hair, while devil-locusts and devil-horses and devil-rulers overrun and desolate the earth and torment its guilty populations. All this and more is contained in the Apocalyptic descriptions of the downgoing of this present world. Wonders on wonders of dire judgment will succeed each other, until, as John beheld, "the first heaven and the first earth are gone, and the sea no longer is" (Rev. 21 : 1). All this the apostle sums up in the text when he says, "The heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also

and the works that are therein shall be burned up;" and out of the scene of ruin shall issue, according to promise, "new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness."

But the apostle at the same time prophesies

III. An Ill Skepticism on this Subject.

With special emphasis, as a thing of the very first consequence to our security and peace, he would have us understand and retain in mind "that there shall come in the last days mockers in mockery, walking according to their own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of His coming? For since the fathers fell asleep all things continue just so from the beginning of the creation."

"The last days" are the days bordering on the time of the end as the great day of the Lord draws near. These mockers are therefore the dregs of men in the dregs of time, and their mocking taunt is specially directed against the Christian hope of our Lord's second coming and the momentous changes which are then to be wrought. It is indeed the taunt of a general skepticism as to everything supernatural, but it is specially levelled against the promised miraculous interventions of the Son of God, because when that hope is gone there is no Gospel left, Christ is denuded of His strength, and our religion perishes. The devil has ever shown himself most anxious to pluck up faith in the coming again of Christ, for with that must go the very life of Christianity and the great power by which it is impelled. A Gospel without miracle in its past and

future is a dead and worthless thing. If Nature is God, then Christ is nothing and hope is at an end. If there is no resurrection of the dead, no almighty Power to break in and rectify the inequalities and disorders of the world that now is, no eternal judgment, no reign of righteousness to be enforced to the destruction of all in arms against the just and holy rule of God, then is our faith, our preaching, vain, and saints are of all men most miserable in denying themselves here with a view to honors and rewards which can never be realized. Everything rests on the power and coming of the Lord Jesus, and hence it is that Satan is so malignant toward this particular doctrine, and stirs up the unbelieving, the half-believing, and the worldly to decry the preaching of it, to try to laugh it down, and to load it with all the odium they can.

But it is a bad and self-stultifying thing for people to indulge in such a temper. If they call themselves Christians, they ought to know that they are stabbing the very heart of all that is distinctive and blessed in what they profess to receive. Those who have it in them to twit and taunt believers for their anxious looking for their Lord from heaven the the apostle here characterizes as carnal. They are people who walk according to their own likings and lusts, and not according to God's Word or the sober truth. Whatever else they may be, they are mockers, revilers, speaking evil of things they understand not, and destined to perish in their own corruption; for there is no crown of righteousness for them that love not Christ's appearing (2 Tim. 4 : 8).

Nor does it make the case any better that they propose to reason out their skeptical taunts by philosophic arguments. They may prate about the permanency of nature and its ordinary laws, and proclaim the fulfilment of any such things as are predicted and promised touching Christ's return to judgment impossible. They may hold the long experience of man more certain than the Word of God. They may point to ages of time since Christ ascended to heaven or since those who thought His coming near have fallen asleep, wherein things have continued just as they are, and hold it absurd to count on any variation of what has been so unvaryingly uniform. But it will not help them. In spite of all such reasoning, and under conditions in which such philosophy might justly have been accepted as more conclusive than now, just such a miraculous and universal cataclysm as they pronounce impossible did nevertheless occur, leaving its indelible record upon the mind and traditions of all the primitive peoples and engraved upon the rocks for ever. If nature's permanence had to give way to the Flood in Noah's time, certainly there is nothing to keep it from giving way again for the great and terrible day of the Lord. As there has been one such mighty break in the settled order of nature, the absurdity is with those who hold it ridiculous to think there may be another. In a case like this what hath been can certainly be again, and the apostle declares those wilfully blind who undertake to assert or maintain the contrary. If the old world could perish by water, the present world can also perish by fire.

Nor does the long delay since the promise was first given weigh anything against the certainty of its fulfilment. Men may take it so, but they only accept an unfounded conclusion. Four thousand years passed from the giving of the original promise to His first coming, but He came. God is not slack or tardy as these laughing mockers count it. There is good reason for the seeming slowness apart from any supposed superannuation of the promise. God can well afford to wait, for to Him one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. In reality, there is no yesterday or to-morrow with Him. All time and eternity is to Him a single *now*, and the delay of His promise for as many years as would measure the precessional cycle is still no delay to Him. But He is in no hurry to execute sentence upon the workers of iniquity. He is forbearing and good, and hence gives room for full play to His economy of grace for the recovery of sinners to righteousness and salvation. What some may call slackness is really His long-suffering to usward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. And it is all the more base and wicked in such mockers that they turn God's forbearing mercy to them into an argument of ridicule against His blessed revelations.

Dear friends, let us not deceive ourselves: "God is not mocked." Our making light of His solemn Word will not unmake its truth. Think and reason as we may, "the day of the Lord will come." People may laugh and ridicule, but that will not keep it off. An old writer has justly said, "It is better

to be a fool than a flouter; better to have a dull spirit than a deriding spirit; for God surely scorneth scorners; He will laugh at their calamity, and mock when their desolation cometh." Let us see to it, then, that we be not among them; "for we have not followed cunningly-devised fables when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Twenty-seventh Sunday after Trinity.

1 Thess. 5 : 1–11 : But of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you.

For yourselves know perfectly, that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night.

For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape.

But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief.

Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness.

Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober.

For they that sleep, sleep in the night; and they that be drunken, are drunken in the night.

But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation.

For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ. Who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him.

Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also ye do.

LUTHER once said that the ways of God are like a Hebrew book, which can only be read from the end backward. Rightly to adjust and direct ourselves for this present world, we need to know what the outcome is to be. A correct eschatology is essential to a true and living Christianity. And without the

mighty doctrine of "the power and coming of the Lord Jesus Christ" the keystone in the arch of the Christian system is wanting, and the whole thing, both practically and theoretically, must tumble to pieces.

Very certain it is that the Scriptures make as much use of the doctrine of the coming again of our Saviour as of any other. At least one verse in every thirty contained in the New Testament directly refers to this subject. There are in all 7959 verses in the New Testament, and more than 320 of them treat of the appearing again of Jesus Christ and the great day of the Lord. When the holy apostles appealed to the consciences of men and sought to stir them up to Christian life and activity, the argument used was the speedy coming of the Son of man in the glory of the Father to deliver His people and bring the wicked to account for all their ungodly deeds. When they called on men to repent, it was "because God hath appointed a day in the which He will judge the world in righteousness, by that Man whom He hath ordained" (Acts 17 : 30, 31). When they sought to stimulate believers to holiness and virtue, it was that when He shall appear they might have confidence and not be ashamed before Him at His coming (1 John 2 : 18). When they would comfort those in suffering and persecution, the word was, "Be patient; stablish your hearts; for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh" (James 5 : 8). When they gave charge to the ministers of the Word, it was with solemn appeal as "before God and the Lord Jesus

Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at His appearing and kingdom" (2 Tim. 4 : 1). And the Saviour Himself, when He would arouse men to the folly of exchanging the soul for the pleasures and possessions of this world, held up to them the one great fact that "the Son of man shall come in the glory of His Father, with His angels; and then He shall reward every man according to his works" (Matt. 16 : 26, 27). When He would incite men to bold and faithful confession, the only motive He named was, "Whosoever shall be ashamed of me and my words, of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when He shall come in His own glory, and in His Father's, and of the holy angels" (Luke 9 : 26). And among His last and most emphatic words, spoken to His churches and to all the world—spoken, indeed, from heaven itself—is the solemn and stirring announcement, "Behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be" (Rev. 22 : 12, 20).

It is scarcely possible, therefore, for us to dwell too much upon this subject. Every page of the New Testament brings it into view. We cannot say the Creed or intelligently pray the Lord's Prayer without striking upon it. Nor can we be in all respects right Christians, or safely count on receiving the crown of righteousness to be given to the lovers of Christ's appearing at that day, if we ignore it and refuse to concern ourselves about it. Of course we are not to make an *-ism* of it, to super-exalt it to the detriment of other great ele-

ments of the faith, to run mad upon it, as if nobody can be an honest and true believer without seeing the matter in all respects just as we do. That would be fanaticism, and not sober Christianity. And yet there is scarce another point on which the Church of our day is more in need of much plain talk and very earnest stirring up than just on this particular topic. It is not that Christian people do not believe in the coming again of Christ and the day of judgment. It is not that they repudiate it or never refer to it or do not allow it place in their formal creeds. But still, there is a reserve and shyness with regard to it, a prejudice against the study of it, a lack of appreciation of its true character and place, which render it comparatively inert and dead.

Dr. Chalmers once wrote down in his private journal this sad confession: "I have all my life viewed the truths of Christianity too much in the way of speculation and as if at a distance. I have not closed with them; I have not laid hold of them; I have not apprehended them. I have been persuaded of the truth of the promises, but not embraced them." And precisely this might the great body of modern Christendom write against itself, especially with reference to the promise of the coming again of our Lord Jesus Christ. People view it too much in the way of speculation, as if at a distance, and with a certain degree of cold reserve. They do not "close with it." They do not "lay hold of it." They are "persuaded of the truth of it," but "do not embrace it." It does not come out in their

teachings and utterances as a living thing in their hearts and practical anticipations. What we need is to embrace it with the soul, close in with it as one of the indubitable certainties of the faith on which all our eternal hopes hang, and to keep it before us as an ever-present stimulant in all honest dutifulness, that our blessed Saviour is presently to "appear the second time without sin unto salvation" to all them that look for Him (Heb. 9 : 28).

Some avoid the subject on the assumption that nobody knows anything about it. Apart from the backhanded compliment thus paid to one of the most conspicuous and transcendent themes in all the revelations of God, it strangely belies the text before us. This church of Thessalonica was yet young, and had but small opportunities for special progress in theology and biblical knowledge, and yet the apostle here writes to its members as *knowing perfectly* the most important elements of this whole matter. And if these young Christians, with nothing but the Old Testament and the Gospel of Luke to refer to, and only their ordinary teachers to instruct them, could "know perfectly" so much about the coming of the Saviour and the day of the Lord as hardly to need further light concerning it, it is absurd, if not also *wicked*, to conclude that, with the whole Bible before us and all the instructions of Christ and His apostles spread out in every book of the complete New Testament, the thing is too barren to deserve consideration! The mere thought is a scandal to the Christian profession.

With these general remarks let us now turn more especially to the text, and devoutly consider it. Two things are here set before us—

I. What these People Knew;
II. What we are to Do.

And may the Holy Spirit assist us in our contemplations, that we may not fail to profit by the truth!

I. What these People Knew.

1. They knew perfectly that the day of the Lord would come. So the apostle affirms. This proves that their teachers had made the subject very prominent and emphatic in their preaching and instructions to the people. Otherwise, it is not possible that they should have known anything about it. Of very few of our modern congregations can it be said that its members know perfectly about the day of the Lord and the coming again of Christ. In general, the churches now have no clear and definite faith on the subject. Why? For the simple reason that they get no instruction concerning it. It has so dropped out of the mind and faith of the Church, and out of the teachings of the pulpit, that the great body of our modern Christians hardly know any more that there is to be a coming again of the Lord Jesus or that this is any vital matter in the Christian Creed. They even stare when it is touched, as if it were some new and strange doctrine, and are prone to set down the preachers of it as cranks, at least a little off of their balance. All

this shows how different most preaching now is from what it was under the apostles at the beginning of Christianity. Here was a young church, not yet much advanced in Christian knowledge, and yet it knew perfectly about the coming of the day of the Lord, and was most deeply and practically concerned about it. Its members were in such deep anxieties concerning it that the apostle needed to ease their troubled minds; but those anxieties sprung from undoubting faith and a living apprehension of the reality and immediate presence of what they had learned to be the great hope of the Church. And a great thing will it be for all professed believers when they come to know and realize, as did these Thessalonian Christians, that it belongs to the deepest practical essence of Christianity to be eagerly looking for the speedy coming again of the Lord Jesus to raise the dead who sleep in Him, to translate the living who are waiting for him, and to appear as the great Judge to overwhelm the despisers of His Word, the neglecters of His Gospel, and the whole alien world which refuses to have Him rule over it.

2. These people further knew perfectly that no man could tell the times or the seasons of Christ's coming, but that it would come, and that to the unbelieving and the wicked it would come unexpectedly, "as a thief in the night." Subsequently, by some unwise and unfounded intimations they were led to suspect that the day had already set in, and that the first stages of the expected advent had already occurred without taking them to meet

the Lord in the air, as they had been led to antici pate. It was a mistake, which the apostle corrected in his Second Epistle, but the very mistake serves to show with what profound interest everything relating to their faith centred in the coming again of Christ, and how differently this whole matter was conceived under apostolic instructions from what it is now. It shows us that the early Church apprehended the promised return of the Saviour as embracing different stages and events, and as being quite another thing to the Church from what it is to be to the world at large. It shows us also that these people put no millennium, or thousand years, between them and the possible fulfilment of the promise, but were looking for and expecting it continually as liable to occur at any time.

Two opposite and very damaging errors have betimes developed themselves with reference to "the times and the seasons" of this great and solemn matter. On the one hand, teachers have arisen to make calculations and to fix upon definite periods, saying, At such and such a time the Lord will come, or that, Within such a limit of years the trumpet will sound. The confidence with which this has betimes been done, and the utter failure which has invariably attended all such attempts, have furnished much encouragement and a copious fund of taunting sarcasm for infidelity and rationalism, causing many to ignore the whole subject as dangerous, and to throw it out of their attention and serious regard. In every way this is to be lamented. But, on the other hand, there has arisen an equally damaging putting off of

the time, as if this or that must first be accomplished, the world be converted, the millennium of triumph for the Church in this present world intervene, or this or that special thing be realized before it is possible for the promise of the coming of the great day of the Lord to be fulfilled. Such teachings nullify and pluck up by their roots a large series of special precepts and admonitions most solemnly enjoined in all the Scriptures, and have served to bereave the Church of one of the most quickening and powerful motives to holiness, fidelity, and earnest Christian life that the blessed Lord has given us.

The truth is, "of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven" (Mark 13 : 32). When the disciples questioned the Saviour respecting the matter, "He said unto them, It is not for you to know the times and the seasons, which the Father hath put in His own power" (Acts 1 : 7). This these Thessalonians knew, so that there was no occasion for Paul to write them respecting it. And because no man knows or can know when the Son of man cometh, people go against the Scriptures and the clear intention of God when they undertake to affirm, on any grounds whatever, that within any given time the Lord either will or will not come. For aught that any mortal knows, He may come any of these passing days or nights; and we can no more say He will come within the next year or two than we can say He will not come in our day, much less for a thousand years yet. We know not when He will come, and

hence the true Christian attitude is to be in ready expectancy of it all the time.

3. These people also knew what a sudden and terrible catastrophe the day of the Lord will bring to the unprepared and the ungodly. They were fully aware that it will take the common world with surprise and steal upon it "as a thief in the night;" that is, unobserved in its approach, unexpected, unheralded, unthought of, when there is not the least suspicion of what is about to happen. This thief business is one of the favorite figures of Christ and His apostles to describe the coming of that day upon those who believe not or fail to keep themselves on spiritual guard respecting it. But "the thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy" (John 10 : 10). Secrecy, stealth, hostile intent, and mischief, as well as unexpectedness, are necessarily included. So the apostle further explains: "When they are saying, Peace and safety"—when they are least of all dreaming of such a thing and most congratulating themselves upon their security—"then sudden destruction cometh upon them, even as travail upon her that is with child, and they shall in no wise escape." The Saviour Himself says: "As the days of Noah were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. For as in the days that were before the Flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark, *and knew not* until the Flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be" (Matt. 24 : 37–39). It is not that no signs or forewarnings are given, but because

there is no faith in such things, no regard for the divine Word, no fear of God's judgments, and only a light-making of what the prophets have written for our admonition, that the whole thing springs upon them as a snare, and sudden perdition is their fate. Being in the darkness of sin and ignorance, engaged with the dreams and works of darkness, and disdaining the light which the Scriptures give, the long-restrained vengeance strikes, and there is nothing but doom and desolation left to them.

People in their unbelief, their carnal vanity, their intense worldliness, and their flouting contempt for the doctrines they think they have outgrown, may only laugh at these presentations; but it shall be all the worse for them. God's sword is whetted in heaven, and in a moment that they think not the fiery vengeance of the great day shall be upon them as on the cities of the plain, and "the mountains shall be melted with their blood." For "the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ; who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of His power" (2 Thess. 1 : 7–9).

Dear friends, these are most solemn things. It will never do for us to trifle with them. It is God Himself who has spoken, and He will make good what He has said. Heaven and earth shall sooner cease to be than that one jot or one tittle of His Word should fail. Consider, then,

II. What We are to Do in the Matter.

Though it is clearly taught in the Scriptures that the day of the Lord shall come upon the common world "as a thief in the night"—that is, to the surprise and irremediable loss of the careless and unbelieving—there be some to whom it will *not* come "as a thief." There be "children of light and children of the day" to whom it will be no such stealthy and unexpected a calamity. In every generation there are some whom God has called out of darkness into His marvellous light—people who have heard the Gospel Word, believed it, and answered to it—people who have accepted Christ as their Lord and Saviour, and through faith in Him have denied ungodliness and worldly lust, and set themselves to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world, looking for the blessed hope and appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ—people whom the day of the Lord will neither surprise nor harm. Nay, when that day proper is upon the unregenerate world these will already be with their Saviour in the air, and far beyond the reach of any of the disasters then to overtake earth's ungodly inhabitants.

And to this favored company the apostle says these Thessalonians belonged. Should they be still living at the Lord's coming, he tells them, "Ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake *you* as a thief. Ye are all the children of light, and the children of day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness."

It is worthy of note here that the illumination of which unbelief boasts the apostle calls darkness. Darkness it verily is, for it proposes to construe this universe without the Almighty One who made, upholds, and governs it, and to explain the world without the Redeemer who is the centre of its history and the conditioner of its destiny. Faith may indeed have made no great progress in what the world calls *science*, but faith alone has hold of the true philosophy of things, and only from its standpoint can there be any understanding of what is or is to be Without faith in God and His Christ all the wisdom of this world can only go about asking, "What is truth?" never able to come into the clear. It has nothing positive on which to rest. It is mere agnosticism; it cannot really know anything. Its own profession is that it does not know and cannot know and that nobody does know. It is nothing but darkness, and every advance it claims only adds to the darkness. And none but true believers in God and His Christ have any clear and certain light by which to direct their way. They only are the children of light on the way to the inheritance of the saints in light.

First of all, then, as we would be secure against the disasters of the great day of the Lord, we must become such as these Thessalonians were. We must be the children of light and of the day, which can only be by faith in Christ Jesus. Paul says that these people had received the apostolic word with joy; that they had become followers and imitators of himself and of the Lord Jesus; and that they had

turned from idols to serve the living and true God and to wait for His Son from heaven. It was this that made them pattern believers, as he calls them, and the secure children of light. This was their Christianity as Paul describes it; and in this we must be like them, take the same stand, and be animated with the same purposes and hopes, if we would be in like safety and assured peace. Unwilling to become earnest and honest Christian believers, there is no hope for us. And much as we may promise ourselves peace and safety, so long as we are not faithful Christians sudden destruction certainly awaits us.

O ye neglectful lingerers about the margin of the kingdom, yet declining to enlist under the Saviour's banner!—ye people of ease, business, and pleasure, happy in your pleasant homes, your easy-going ways, your boon companions, your good estate in this world, never thinking of your souls, putting far from you the claims of God, and caring not about your eternal future!—ye that have many a time promised yourselves to be Christians and are not, or have laid your vows upon God's altar, and only turned away from them to neglect and revile the Church!—ye that make a merit of your non-profession, and are glad for the chance to say ill things of church-people, swift to condemn, though yourselves in far deeper condemnation!—let me say to you that this is no way to live if you would not have sudden destruction come upon you. Christ is Lord, and you must confess and honor Him. Sin is an abomination in His sight, and you

must renounce it and repent out of it. If there be false members in His Church, that will not excuse your unrighteousness, nor will their faults justify your disdain of God's requirements. If others are hypocrites, your scoffing will not add to your security. It is your own soul that is in danger; and if you are not willing to commit it to Christ's keeping as a humble and dutiful Christian, you must bear the consequences.

2. But even Christians are liable to become dull, drowsy, and indifferent. Hence the word, "*Let us not sleep, as do others.*" The world is never half awake to spiritual things. Even when it is most lively and clearsighted to discover and denounce the faults of Christians, it is very dead and stupid with regard to its own deficiencies. Its eyes are shut and its senses locked to all the demands of God and the wants of the soul. Its devotees are the children of darkness and of the night, and they give themselves to the business of the night; and Christians are in danger of lapsing into the same spiritual lethargy and sleep, and so of being overtaken by the same disastrous surprise. Therefore they must be on their guard, and be sure to keep awake to the things of God and eternity. It is a dangerous thing for Christians to sleep. The Saviour tells of certain servants who put far from them the evil day, and begin to smite their fellow-servants, and to eat and drink with the drunken, but to whom the Lord cometh in a day when they look not for Him, and in an hour they are not aware of, and shall cut them off, and appoint them their portion with hypocrites. Not

even Christianity can save us unless we keep awake and alive to its duties and requirements.

And this wakefulness has special reference to the coming again of the Lord Jesus. The direction of the apostle is, "Let us not sleep, as do others; but *let us watch and be sober.*" There is no Christian duty more constantly or more solemnly enjoined in the Scriptures than this of watching. The Saviour Himself commands it over and over with the utmost point and urgency. (See Matt. 24 : 42–51; 25 : 13; Mark 13 : 33–37; Luke 12 : 35–37; 21 : 34–36; Rev. 16 : 15.) And thus to watch implies a lively faith in the certainty and constant impendency of the great day of the Lord. No one can really watch for an event which he does not believe will come to pass, or which he thinks cannot occur in his lifetime.

The reason that we are to watch is, that we know not when the time is, and that any day or year our Lord may come without another word of warning more than we already have. The same implies also the keeping of ourselves in constant readiness to stand before the judgment-seat of Christ. Each day is to be lived as if it might be our last, each going from our homes as if perchance we might never return to them again, each retirement at night as if the next opening of our eyes may be upon the King of kings in His judgment glories. This may require a very rigid tightening up of things to moral earnestness and a very serious sobering of mind and behavior, but it is all involved in watching that that day may not come upon us unawares

3. There is likewise a divine panoply in which to keep ourselves arrayed as sentinels at our post or as soldiers on the field of battle. There is a "breastplate," or coat of mail, which we are to wear upon us, even the cuirass of "faith and love." Without faith it is impossible to be on terms with God, and without charity there is no living faith; but where faith is, and shows its fruits in works of love, there is the victory which overcometh the world and giveth boldness in view of the coming of the Lord. There is also a "helmet," at once an ornament and defence, to cover with glory and to assure in the midst of danger and trial; and that helmet is "the hope of salvation." This we are to appropriate with joyous confidence and wear with courage, that our heads, like David's, may be lifted up above all enemies round about us (Ps. 27 : 6). With all the greater assurance may we also do this, since God has appointed and called us, not to condemnation and wrath, but to obtain salvation. His will runs with the best will and desire we can cherish on the subject; and to this end has the Lord Jesus died for us, that, whether He comes in our lifetime or not till long after we are dead, we still may live together with Him.

4. And the better to build ourselves and each other up in Christian confidence and hope there is yet one other particular named; and that is the making of this subject a matter of frequent and earnest conversation in our intercourse with one another. So Paul directed these Thessalonians, and so he says they also did. With these very

topics we are to "comfort one another, and edify one another." But, alas! how rare a thing it is in our day to hear professors of religion discoursing with each other in fraternal confidence about the blessed hope of the Saviour's speedy coming, or trying to comfort and build up each other with the prophecies and promises respecting the great day of the Lord! When anything is said about it, it is rather in the tone of deprecation and warning against having anything to do with unfulfilled prophecy, or to stigmatize and pull down as enthusiasts, cranks, and disturbers any who feel bound in conscience to try to teach what the Scriptures so impressively inculcate. Instead of upholding and encouraging those who would be faithful stewards in giving the household of faith the seasonable meat on this theme, people only fault and despise them for it, call them hard names, sneer at them, and strike at them as an ill sort of creatures. Nothing can be more contrary to the scriptural inculcations than this, or more against the means of Christian edification here prescribed by the apostle. Nay, it is a wickedness which must needs result disastrously to those who make themselves guilty of it. When the apostle, in the preceding chapter, discoursed to these Thessalonians about the coming of the Lord with a shout, and with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God, and told how the dead in Christ will then be raised, the living saints translated, and both classes caught up together in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, he exhorted them to "*comfort one another with these words.*" He

knew of nothing better fitted to dry their tears over their departed ones or more fully adapted to their edification in Christ Jesus. Here he once more tells what a blessed thing the coming of the Lord would be to them, whether it should find them still living on the earth or sleeping in their graves, and repeats his admonition to comfort and edify one another with the same contemplations.

Modern Christians shudder and say, How terrible to think that Christ may come in our day! Paul says, No: "comfort one another with these words." Jesus says, No: "when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh" (Luke 21 : 28). John says, No: "even so come, Lord Jesus" (Rev. 22 : 20). Luther says, No: "God grant that the last judgment may come without delay! I would readily eat up this necklace of agates to-day for it to come to-morrow." And doubtful indeed must be the faith and the safety of those who shrink from the speedy coming of our blessed Lord, and evince so much impatience at hearing of this greatest of all the outstanding promises of God.

Dear friends, let us not miss the true goal of our calling. The coming day of the Lord, with all its terribleness to the ungodly and the unbelieving, is to be our happiest day—the day of our sublimest triumph and jubilee. The promised return of Jesus, though fraught with such unspeakable calamity to His enemies, is the true resting-place of our hopes, the proper strength of our souls, the very heart of our Christian joy. The downgoing of this corrupt,

godless, and doomed world, with all the unprecedented disasters which are to attend it, is the birth-hour of our enfranchisement, the day of our immortal coronation. Let us, then, rejoice and be glad in it, and comfort one another with eager anticipations of its coming. And whether men commend or revile, approve or sneer, thus faithfully steering for the promised haven, no adversities can harm us nor storms wreck our glorious fortune. However tossed and jarred for these few years of earthly self-denial and turmoil, our success is guaranteed. Jesus has said He will come again to receive us to Himself. Nor will He fail to make good His promises. And beyond the hills which bound our present horizon, beyond the stars which look down so lovingly amid these anxious night-watches, beyond these hard conflicts, doubts, struggles, aches, and ills, when this world's bloom is gone, its pleasures past, its chaplets withered, and all its joys and sorrows over, there still remains for us a realm of light, beauty, victory, glory, and dominion, where those who have borne the Cross shall wear the everlasting Crown.

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